

106th Congress }  
2d Session }

JOINT COMMITTEE PRINT

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106-61 }

# ANNUAL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM 2000

R E P O R T

SUBMITTED TO THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
U.S. SENATE

AND THE

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BY THE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102 OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998



NOVEMBER 2000

Printed for the use of the Committees on Foreign Relations of the U.S.  
Senate and International Relations of the U.S. House of Representatives  
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## FOREWORD

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The report on international religious freedom contained herein was prepared by the Department of State in accordance with Section 102 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

The report is printed to assist Members of Congress in the consideration of legislation, particularly foreign assistance legislation.

JESSE HELMS,

*Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations.*

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN,

*Chairman, Committee on International Relations.*



## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
*Washington, DC, September 5, 2000.*

Hon. JESSE HELMS,  
*Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,*  
*U.S. Senate.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN:

On behalf of the Secretary of State, I am transmitting to you the Report on Religious Freedom, prepared in compliance with Section 102 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

We hope this report is helpful. Please let us know if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

BARBARA LARKIN,  
*Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs.*

Enclosure.



## **PREFACE**

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### **2000 REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

#### **Why The Reports Are Prepared**

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. The law provides that the Secretary of State shall transmit to Congress by September 1 of each year, or the first day thereafter on which the appropriate House of Congress is in session, "an Annual Report on International Religious Freedom supplementing the most recent Human Rights Reports by providing additional detailed information with respect to matters involving international religious freedom." This Annual Report includes 194 reports on countries worldwide.

#### **How The Reports Are Prepared**

In August 1993, the Secretary of State moved to further strengthen the human rights efforts of our embassies. All sections in each embassy were asked to contribute information and to corroborate reports of human rights violations, and new efforts were made to link mission programming to the advancement of human rights and democracy. In 1994 the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs was reorganized and renamed as the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, reflecting both a broader sweep and a more focused approach to the interlocking issues of human rights, worker rights, and democracy. In 1998 the Secretary of State established the Office of International Religious Freedom; in May 1999, Robert A. Seiple was sworn in as the first Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

The 2000 Report covers the period from July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000, and reflects a year of dedicated effort by hundreds of State Department, Foreign Service, and other U.S. Government employees. Our embassies, which prepared the initial drafts of the reports, gathered information throughout this period from a variety of sources, including government and religious officials, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, human rights monitors, religious groups, and academics. This information-gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service Officers regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuse, monitor elections, and come to the aid of individuals at risk because of their religious beliefs.

After the embassies completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and its Offices of International Religious Freedom, Country Reports and Asylum Affairs, and Bilateral Affairs, in cooperation with other State Department offices. As they worked to corroborate, analyze, and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own sources of information. These included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, and experts from academia and the media. Officers also consulted with experts on issues of religious discrimination and persecution, religious leaders from all faiths, and experts on legal matters. The guiding principle was to ensure that all relevant information was assessed as objectively, thoroughly, and fairly as possible.

The Report will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy, and making assistance, training, and other resource allocations. As mandated by IRFA, it also will be used as a basis for decisions on determining countries that have engaged in or tolerated “particularly severe violations” of religious freedom. Countries involved in these and other violations according to IRFA are not identified as such in this report, but have been and will be engaged independently by the U.S. Government. The Report also will serve as a basis for the U.S. Government’s cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of the internationally recognized right to religious freedom.



# INTRODUCTION

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## **Part I: The American Experiment in International Religious Freedom**

Religious freedom has always been at the core of American life and public policy. It is the first of the freedoms enumerated in the Bill of Rights—a reflection of the founders’ belief that freedom of religion and conscience is the cornerstone of liberty. They understood that no government was likely to protect the other core rights (e.g., freedom of speech or freedom from arbitrary arrest) if it did not honor the “sanctum sanctorum” of human conscience—the inherent and inviolable right of every human being to pursue ultimate truth and to believe and worship, or not, as part of that pursuit.

This core precept of American democracy survived 2 centuries of vigorous challenge. Like other aspects of the American ideal, religious liberty has been imperfectly applied; some religious traditions (Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, and indigenous American religions, to name a few) have been resisted, and their adherents subject to discrimination and even persecution. But today, at the dawn of the third millenium, religions are flourishing in the United States, their respective traditions enriching not only their own adherents, but American public policy as well.

### GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

During the 1980’s and 1990’s, more and more American religious organizations became involved in the development and articulation of U.S. human rights policies abroad. Much of this activism stemmed from a shared belief in the universal dignity of the human person—the conviction that every human being is endowed with an intrinsic and inviolable worth, from which flows inalienable rights (a conviction reflected both in the American Declaration of Independence and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights). As American religious communities became more aware of human rights abuses abroad, they began to focus on the plight of coreligionists who were struggling to establish their own right to believe and to worship and who were encountering fierce resistance from those wielding political power.

During the 1990’s some individuals and religious organizations—in particular those from Christian, Buddhist, and Jewish traditions—began to lobby the Administration and Congress. Their goal was to sharpen the focus of American foreign policy on religious persecution abroad. The result was a textbook case of democratic activism. Partly in response to this impulse, the Department of State by the mid 1990’s began to intensify its attention to religious freedom. In 1996 Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, composed of 20 American religious leaders and scholars. In an interim report issued in 1998 and a final report issued in 1999 the Committee recommended structural changes and foreign policy initiatives that would institutionalize the promotion of religious freedom as part of U.S. foreign policy. Throughout its tenure, the Committee was chaired and supported by the Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

During the same period, the Department of State responded to increased public and Congressional interest by preparing a report entitled “U.S. Policies in Support of Religious Freedom: Focus on Christians” (July 1997). The new Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, made it clear that promoting religious freedom was to be a priority during her tenure at the Department. In 1997 she issued instructions to all American Embassies and Consulates to increase U.S. advocacy, monitoring, and reporting on the issue. In multilateral venues such as the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, U.S. delegations made religious freedom a high priority. In 1998, responding to a recommendation by the Advisory Committee, Secretary Albright announced that she would appoint a senior level coordinator for religious freedom.

Meanwhile, Congress was engaging in an extended debate over a legislative approach to promoting religious liberty abroad. In May 1997, Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia and Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania introduced the first version of what was to become—some 18 months later—the International Religious Freedom Act. Their bill triggered a vigorous debate within the faith-based, non-governmental organization (NGO), and human rights communities over the most appropriate and effective ways for the United States to confront religious persecution and discrimination abroad.

During the next year and a half a national dialogue evolved—joined not only by those who had lobbied from the beginning, but by faith-based, human rights, and foreign policy organizations from across the political and religious spectrums. Foreign governments, watching the debate with rising interest, expressed their concerns in capitals abroad and in Washington. The Department of State, led by Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor John Shattuck, made its views known through testimony before the House International Relations Committee and in other venues.

The issues were important—and controversial: How can the United States influence governments (including U.S. allies) that persecute or discriminate against their citizens on the basis of religion? What religions should be covered? What regions? Should economic sanctions be included, and, if so, should they be automatic? Should there be a special category of religious refugees? Should the senior U.S. religious freedom official be located in the White House or the State Department? Should a new governmental body, such as an independent commission, be created to provide the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress a separate source of policy recommendations? Is it legitimate for the United States to identify one form of persecution for special treatment, or would doing so create a troubling “hierarchy of rights” that could marginalize other victims of persecution? Could victims of religious persecution actually be harmed by a new U.S. focus on their plight?

These and other issues were debated intensely throughout 1997 and 1998. In March 1998, Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma introduced in the Senate an alternative bill which attempted to build on the commentary that Wolf-Specter had generated. In May 1998, the House passed a revised version of the latter bill. During the next 6 months, a few dedicated and passionate Congressional staff members, joined at times by State Department representatives and other key actors, met to hammer out a bill that would have broad bipartisan support. In October 1998, the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) was passed unanimously by both Houses of Congress and was signed immediately by the President.

#### A LEGISLATIVE MANDATE COMES TO LIFE

The various streams that led to the Act had their source in the American passion for religious liberty and the conviction that it was the birthright of every human being. Herein lay the greatest potential for an effective U.S. religious freedom policy abroad: While the Act paid homage to American history and the first Amendment, it drew heavily on international standards grounded in universal truths. It cited the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which notes that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience.”

In short, the IRFA made no attempt to impose “the American way” on foreign governments. Rather, it put the weight of American foreign policy behind the proposition that all nations must adhere to the standards of international behavior that they themselves have accepted, including the mandate to protect the universal right of religious freedom and freedom of conscience. The Act was universal in scope: it targeted no region and covered all religions. It provided sanctions for the worst violators of religious freedom, but sanctions were not automatic. Instead, the President was given wide latitude to choose the most effective response to severe violations.

In order to carry out this policy, the Act created three core mechanisms: an Office of International Religious Freedom under an Ambassador at Large, located in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; an Annual Report that covers every foreign country, coupled with an annual identification of severe violators; and a separate, bipartisan U.S. Commission to make independent recommendations.

The Office of International Religious Freedom. In August 1998, Robert A. Seiple assumed the office of Special IRF Adviser to the President and Secretary of State. In May 1999, he was sworn in as the first Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. During his 2-year tenure, Seiple built his office into a staff of 10, including foreign service, military, and civil service officers. Its mandate is to promote religious freedom as a core tenet of U.S. human rights policy by monitoring religious persecution and discrimination worldwide; meeting with foreign govern-

ments, faith-based groups, and NGO's; integrating the issue into the mainstream of U.S. foreign policy; and overseeing the production of the Annual Report on International Religious Freedom. The Office is also charged with advising the Secretary of State on the designation of "countries of particular concern" under the IRF Act.

Seiple's methodology has been to "promote, not punish." He and his staff have visited 26 countries—many of them among the world's worst abusers of religious freedom—in order to explain his emphasis, and that of the IRF Act, on international standards as the basis for U.S. actions. They have met with hundreds of foreign officials, religious leaders, NGO's, and human rights groups at home and abroad. They have heard the stories of people who fear for their well-being and safety because of their religious beliefs. They have told allies and adversaries alike that freedom of religion and conscience is not a western invention but flows from the traditions of universal and inviolable human dignity present in every world religion.

The Office of International Religious Freedom also has articulated and advocated U.S. policy in academic and policy conferences and media events throughout the country and abroad. It has initiated a series of conferences, co-sponsored by the Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, on religious freedom and foreign policy. It has implemented a highly successful program of outreach to U.S. Muslim leaders and plans to expand this program to include other American religious traditions. It has provided funding—through the Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund—for several NGO-led reconciliation programs in religion-based conflicts. Ambassador Seiple has testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House International Relations Committee and its Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, the Helsinki Commission, and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

In all its endeavors, the Office of International Religious Freedom has sought (in the words of the Act) to "stand with the persecuted," to provide hope to the millions throughout the world who suffer because they dare to believe in, and to worship, an authority beyond the state.

*The Annual Report.* The first Annual Report on International Religious Freedom was issued by the Department of State in September 1999. It contained chapters on the status of religious freedom in 194 countries worldwide. Each chapter was initially drafted in an American Embassy or Consulate abroad and then compiled and edited by the Office of Country Reports and Asylum Affairs in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. Its introduction focused on the connection between concepts of universal human dignity and freedom of religion and explained some of the report's analytical methods. Its Executive Summary highlighted various categories of restrictions on religious liberty worldwide, while detailing U.S. efforts to address those restrictions.

Religious organizations, NGO's, and human rights groups generally hailed the first report as an important first step in the battle against religious persecution. Foreign governments' responses varied widely, from outright hostility to private gratitude. Some insisted that the United States had no right to invoke international standards unilaterally and that such issues could only be addressed in international forums. Others (including some democratic allies) asserted a right of state-supported scrutiny of, and hostility toward, certain minority religions.

Indeed, as elaborated elsewhere in this Report, the United States agrees that issues of religious freedom ought to be addressed in international forums. It does so regularly and vigorously. But the United States also believes that all nations have the right, and the obligation, to address on a bilateral basis with other nations those international standards that they themselves have accepted. Further, the international provision for freedom of religion and conscience is grounded in state acceptance of minority religions rather than in state-supported skepticism or hostility. Religious freedom is a good, not a danger from which citizens must be protected—a fact that even some mature democracies have not yet accepted.

The U.S. Commission on IRF. The IRF Act also mandated the creation of an independent, bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, consisting of nine eminent American leaders from a variety of faiths. Five were appointed by the President and Democratic Congressional leaders; four by Republican Congressional leaders. The Ambassador at Large also sits on the Commission as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

The Commission was established for 4 years beginning in May 1999, and each Commissioner was given a 2-year term. The first Chairman was Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and a Democratic appointee. The deputy chairman was Michael K. Young, Dean of the George Washington University Law Center and a Republican appointee. To emphasize its bipartisan nature, the Commission agreed that its chair and deputy would rotate annually between appointees of the two parties. Accordingly, in May 2000, the chair

passed to Elliot Abrams, President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center (Republican appointee), and the deputy chair to Firuz Kazemzadeh, Secretary of External Affairs of the National Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States (Democratic appointee).

Other Democratic appointees are Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of the Archdiocese of Newark; Dr. Laila al-Mariati, Past President of the Muslim Women's League; and Justice Charles Z. Smith of the Washington State Supreme Court. Other Republican appointees are Nina Shea, Director of the Center for Religious Freedom, Freedom House, and John Bolton of the American Enterprise Institute. The Commission's staff is headed by its Executive Director, Steven McFarland.

As part of its mandate to recommend policies on religious freedom, the Commission prepares its own annual report, the first of which was issued in May 2000. This report focused on three countries of concern—China, Sudan and Russia—and provided extensive recommendations for U.S. policymakers. It also contained a thorough review of the State Department's first Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, including a series of recommendations on how it might be improved.

The Commission has begun to play an important role in the articulation and implementation of U.S. policy. Its members and staff have met with key Department of State officials, including the Secretary of State and the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Commission members have traveled abroad to gather information and to advocate religious freedom. They have held public hearings and testified before the U.S. Congress on many occasions. Commission recommendations—communicated publicly or privately to the Administration—have already had an impact on key policy decisions, including the Secretary of State's designation of "countries of particular concern" under the IRF Act.

*The Scorecard.* On balance the new U.S. strategy for promoting religious freedom has had a promising beginning. From its origins in the minds of a few committed individuals, to its implementation in the actions of Secretary Albright, President Clinton and the U.S. Congress, U.S. religious freedom policy has provided a case study—both of the American democratic process and of the universal applicability of America's founding precepts.

Energized and formed by an American approach to freedom of religion, the policy has nevertheless been articulated as part of an international covenant, in which nations commit themselves to mutual accountability. There are risks in this approach—not least the exposure of the United States to criticism from others. But if it is sound, U.S. policy will withstand—and profit from—the scrutiny of other nations, human rights organizations, and religious groups.

In his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 16, 2000, Ambassador Robert Seiple articulated his sense of how far U.S. policy has come, and the enormous task that remains. "Those of us who are charged with implementing the International Religious Freedom Act," he said, "have had some modest but invigorating victories—some religious prisoners freed, some religious refugees assisted, a few bad laws repealed or altered. But we must take the long view: None of us can claim, nor should we expect, that the millions who suffer for their religious beliefs will have been loosed from their torments 18 months after the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act or because of the actions of my office or those of the independent U.S. Commission. But, I believe that we have made a start. Together, we have planted seeds—seeds of hope and of future action. With God's help, those seeds are taking root and will one day bear fruit."

## **Part II: Freedom of Religion and Conscience as a Cornerstone of Democracy**

One of the most encouraging developments of the past decade has been the dramatic increase in the number of nations aspiring to democratic governance. In Europe, central Asia, Africa, and Latin America, countries are struggling to develop and implement the norms of representative government. As noted in the 1999 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, the number of democracies in the world almost doubled during the decade of the 1990's.

That report also noted that freedom alone is no guarantee of human dignity. Adopting the forms of democracy does not always signify an acceptance of universal human rights, including the right of religious freedom. This is sometimes true because democratic majorities are tied to a particular religious tradition, or to a tradition of religious skepticism, and are resistant to new and unfamiliar religions. In some aspiring democracies, minority religions are associated with unpopular ethnic groups or with unwanted foreign influence. For these and other reasons, democracy alone is no guarantee of religious freedom.

And yet it is empirically indisputable that representative governments protect fundamental human rights, including freedom of religion and conscience, far more effectively than other political systems. Several characteristics of democracy tend to bolster religious freedom, including the principles of equality before the law, protections for minorities, and a commitment to notions of universal human dignity and the protection of fundamental human rights. Democratic governments were the driving force in the promulgation of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In addition, most democratic traditions recognize that fundamental rights are not “grants” from the state or society but exist prior to both. If they do not—if human rights are in fact created by governments—then they cannot be said to be “universal” as the world acknowledged them to be in the 1948 Universal Declaration. “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” notes the Declaration, and are “endowed with reason and conscience.” If governments were the source of rights, governments could abolish them.

Moreover, the incompatibility of authoritarianism and religious liberty is grounded in an empirical political reality: the state that honors and nourishes freedom of religion and conscience is one that acknowledges its own limits. It is a state that posits the priority of the individual and of society. It is, in short, a state that embraces the axiom of democracy—government exists to serve society and the individual, not the other way around.

Thus, while democratic states are the most likely guarantors of religious freedom, so too is religious freedom an essential component of democracy. The right of religious liberty is an obstacle to “majoritarian tyranny”—the practices of democratic majorities who would coerce minorities in matters of fundamental conscientious conviction. Nations that are struggling to implement democracy, and in which one religion is historically dominant, will profit from this understanding of human freedom. Healthy and vigorous democracies do not attempt to control or manage the human quest for ultimate meaning and truth. They understand that this endeavor is essential to human freedom and dignity—and must be protected.

Freedom of religion and conscience also contributes to democracy in that the free expression of religious conviction—guaranteed in international covenants—plays a key role in debates over public policy. Each religious tradition has a moral code, a way of understanding who we are and how we ought to order our lives together. The articulation of these understandings in the public square is not something to be feared by democracies. Rather it makes a vital contribution to the development of public policy.

This is true because democracy is more than mere democratic procedure. Its vitality, and even its survival, can never be assumed. Democracy is an ever-continuing experiment, testing the capacity of human beings—often from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds—to govern themselves. The success of the experiment relies in part on the successful adoption of democratic procedures such as the universal franchise, separation of powers, or the secret ballot. But history teaches that the habit of democracy is grounded in and transmitted by the prior institutions of society, especially the family and religious institutions.

Mature and aspiring democracies alike must revere the right to freedom of religion and conscience, even as they develop the forms of democratic governance. Governments that purport to represent all their citizens must guarantee and nurture this right, which lies at the core of every human life, as well as encourage mutual respect among their citizens. These governments must acknowledge a core reality, demonstrated by history: New and unfamiliar religions do not threaten democracy; they enrich it. It is a lesson that must be learned and relearned for the on-going, global democratic experiment to succeed.

### **Part III. What Has Changed in the Annual Report**

As noted above, the response to the first Annual Report on International Religious Freedom from NGO's, human rights groups, and religious groups was overwhelmingly positive. Many provided constructive suggestions of fact, tone, and organization. We have made every effort to ensure that each report is factually accurate, balanced, and fair. Our intent is to articulate the status of religious freedom in each country chapter, permitting the reader to draw conclusions concerning the implications of the restrictions or abuses cited. In the Executive Summary, we categorize some of the restrictions and abuses, and discuss U.S. actions to alter them. In order to show that all the news is not bad, we also discuss some of the improvements in religious freedom worldwide.

The country chapters have been reorganized to make them more “reader friendly.” Each chapter will contain an Introduction, designed to provide the reader with a broad overview of the status of religious freedom during the 12 months covered by

the report (July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000). Three major sections will follow: The first will cover “Government Policies on Freedom of Religion” and will contain a variety of subheadings to guide the reader, including subsections on the “Legal/Policy Framework” and “Religious Demography.” Subsections entitled “Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom,” and “Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom” will not only discuss restrictions and abuses but give the context in which those problems occurred.

The second major section will discuss “Societal Attitudes”; the third, “U.S. Government Policy.”

*A Final Word on Respect.* If there is a core assumption underlying this report, it is that religions, like human beings, are worthy of respect. Were that not the case, there would be no need for a U.S. policy on international religious freedom and no need for this report. It exists not as an indictment of religions but as a testimony to the value of religion and to respect for freedom of conscience. We have tried to demonstrate our respect for all religious traditions in this report, a respect that is genuine.

Once again, we invite our readers to provide comments on the report. They can do so by writing the Office of International Religious Freedom (DRL/IRF), Room 4829, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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There are no good reasons for any government to violate religious freedom or to tolerate those within its warrant who do. However, there are many good reasons to promote religious freedom. To that end, this Executive Summary identifies some of the barriers to religious freedom that exist and provides examples of countries where those barriers are in place. It also catalogs some of the improvements in religious freedom that occurred during the period of this report. Finally, it describes actions that the United States has taken, is taking, and will continue to take as a means of fulfilling its responsibilities under its own law and to the human family of which it is a part.

This Executive Summary is divided into three sections:

- I. Barriers to International Religious Freedom
- II. Improvements in International Religious Freedom
- III. U.S. Actions to Promote International Religious Freedom

### **Part I: Barriers to International Religious Freedom**

The vast majority of the world's governments have committed themselves to respect religious freedom. Indeed, most have accepted one or more of the international instruments that explicitly protect that right. For example, 144 countries are parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which acknowledges the right of every human being "to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice" and "either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." All have pledged "not to discriminate on the basis of religion."

Notwithstanding the existence of this and other broadly accepted international instruments protecting religious freedom, there remains in some countries a substantial difference between promise and practice. Much of the world's population lives in countries in which the right to religious freedom is restricted or prohibited. This gap between word and deed has several causes and can be analyzed in various ways. While no analysis is perfect, a system of categorization follows that we believe is useful for understanding religious persecution and discrimination.

Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes are characterized by a determination to control religious belief and practice. The result—inevitably—is persecution. Other regimes are hostile to minority or unapproved religions. Some tolerate, and thereby encourage, persecution or discrimination. Although acts of violence against religious minorities may have several causes—for example, ethnicity, or a perceived security threat—multicausality does not diminish necessarily the significance of religion.

Still other governments—often either democratic or aspirants to democracy—have adopted discriminatory legislation or policies that give preferences to favored religions while disadvantaging others, in contravention of international instruments. Some democratic states have undertaken policies resulting in the stigmatization of minority religions—the result of identifying them indiscriminately and inaccurately with dangerous "sects" or "cults."

Occasionally a nation's policy on religious freedom can be understood better in the context of its history, culture, and tradition—a particular religion may have dominated the life of a nation for centuries, making more difficult the acceptance of new faiths that offer challenges in both cultural and theological terms. However, tradition and culture should not be used as a pretext for legislation or policies that restrict genuine religious belief or its legitimate manifestations. Legal restrictions on religious practice—permitted under international covenants for the protection of public safety, order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others—should be applied scrupulously and fairly, in as limited a way as possible, without discriminating among religions. The practice of requiring religious groups to register before they can engage in activities such as worship is, by its nature, subject to abuse by local jurisdictions, even in cases where it is designed by central authori-

ties to be applied in a nondiscriminatory fashion. Nor should a legitimate concern over the destructive and unlawful behavior of a small number of groups be employed so indiscriminately that new or minority religions—perhaps poorly understood or controversial but nevertheless posing no danger to public safety, health, or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others—are wrongfully stigmatized.

In the end, every nation should meet the standards on religious freedom established by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international instruments and covenants that they have accepted. Each nation is accountable to the international community for its failure to meet these standards. The United States acknowledges and accepts its responsibility to meet these standards in the safeguarding and protection of religious liberty.

#### TOTALITARIAN OR AUTHORITARIAN ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL RELIGIOUS BELIEF OR PRACTICE

Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes are defined by the degree to which they seek to control thought and expression, especially dissent. It is not uncommon for such regimes to regard minority religious groups as enemies of the state because of the content of the religion, the fact that the very practice of religion threatens the dominant ideology (often by diverting loyalties of adherents toward something beyond the state), the ethnic character of the religious group, or a mixture of all three. When this association occurs, the result is often religious persecution directed by the regime.

*Afghanistan.* Afghanistan still does not have a recognized government, and most of the country remains under the control of the Taliban, which has engaged in persecution and killing. The Afghan Shi'a minority has been the victim of Taliban abuses, in significant part because of their religious beliefs. As in previous years, the Taliban enforced its strict interpretation of Islamic Shari'a law and, according to reports, public executions, floggings, and amputations took place weekly against those who violated the law. In September 1999, the Taliban issued decrees aimed at the small non-Muslim minority population, forbidding them from building places of worship, banning them from criticizing Muslims, ordering them to identify their houses, precluding them from living in the same residence as Muslims, and requiring non-Muslim women to wear special identifying clothing.

*Burma.* The Government of Burma continued to repress systematically members of both minority faiths and the majority Buddhist population. Buddhist monks who promoted human and political rights were arrested, and some Buddhist monasteries were destroyed. Government security forces frequently employed coercion to induce Christian members of the Chin ethnic minority to convert to Buddhism. Chin Christians were conscripted for forced labor, required to desecrate their own churches and graveyards, and were subjected to government discrimination. Members of various faiths reported harassment of religious leaders by government authorities.

*China.* Government respect for religious freedom in China deteriorated over the reporting period as the persecution of several religious minorities increased. While membership in many faiths grew rapidly and government supervision of religious activity was minimal in some regions, government officials in other regions imposed tight regulations, closed houses of worship, and actively persecuted members of some unregistered religious groups. Members of such groups were subject to harassment, extortion, prolonged detention, physical abuse, and incarceration in prison or in "reeducation through labor" camps. There were credible reports of religious detainees being beaten and tortured. The Government increased restrictions on members of many minority groups, including Tibetan Buddhists, Muslim Uyghurs, members of Falun Gong and other "heretical cults," and Protestants and Roman Catholics not belonging to the official churches.

*Cuba.* While some observers have noted a greater acceptance of religion in Cuba in recent years, the Government continued to engage in active efforts to monitor and control religious institutions, including the surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of clergy and church members. The Government has refused to register new denominations, thereby making them vulnerable to charges of illegal association.

*Laos.* The Government attempted to supervise and limit religious freedom among the majority Buddhist population, imposing mandatory Marxist-Leninist training for monks. In some instances, local and provincial authorities used harsh, extraconstitutional measures against minority religious groups, including detentions without charge and, in the case of hundreds of Christians, forced renunciations of faith.

*North Korea.* Religious adherents in North Korea deemed unacceptable to the regime are treated harshly; many were imprisoned and some reportedly executed.



(However, these reports cannot be confirmed or disproved, given the tight control the regime exercises over information. Also, these reported executions appear to have involved Christians with links to missionary groups active along the Chinese border. The Government suspects such groups of attempting to overthrow the regime.) Unauthorized religious activity, especially when occurring near sensitive border areas, sometimes was subject to severe repression by North Korean officials. Credible reports indicate that some prisoners were beaten and treated as if they were insane because of their beliefs.

*Vietnam.* The Government uses a registration process to control and monitor religious activity, severely restricting any practice by groups other than officially sanctioned organizations. The Government allows only one organization per religious denomination, and members of nonregistered organizations may face arbitrary harassment and arrest. Clergy from many religious groups, including Cao Dai, Buddhist, Hoa Hao, Protestant, and Roman Catholic organizations were detained arbitrarily without charge. According to credible reports, at least 20 persons remain detained or imprisoned because of their religious beliefs.

#### STATE HOSTILITY TOWARD MINORITY OR NONAPPROVED RELIGIONS

Some governments, while not necessarily determined to implement a program of control over minority religions, nevertheless are hostile to certain religions or to elements of religious groups identified as "security threats." These governments implement policies designed to intimidate certain religious groups, cause their adherents to convert to another religion, or cause their members to flee.

*Iran.* The Government continued to abuse the religious freedom of minority groups. The country's religious minorities, including Baha'is, Jews, Christians, and Sunni Muslims, reported intimidation, harassment, and imprisonment on account of their beliefs. Persecution remains a problem. Baha'is are singled out by the Government, and at least 11 Baha'is were imprisoned. On July 1, 2000, 10 Jewish and 2 Muslim defendants were convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 4 to 13 years on charges of spying. The Revolutionary Court deprived the accused of almost all legitimate means of defense, and its conduct worsened societal attitudes toward the Jewish community.

*Iraq.* The Government for decades has conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, and protracted arbitrary detention against the religious leaders and adherents of the majority Shi'a Muslim population. Security forces murdered senior Shi'a clerics, desecrated mosques and holy sites, arrested tens of thousands of Shi'a, and forcibly prevented Shi'a from practicing their religion. The Government also targeted the country's Christian Assyrians and Chaldeans by denying members their political rights and forcibly removing them from certain areas of the country.

*Pakistan.* In spite of promised improvements following the October 12, 1999, military coup, the Government continued to enforce discriminatory legislation. Some of the legislation directly targeted Ahmadis, who also face severe societal discrimination. Christians, Hindus, Zikris, and other religious minorities also are subject to widespread discrimination and harassment. The so-called blasphemy laws have been used by authorities and private citizens to threaten and intimidate both members of religious minorities and members of the Muslim majority. Sectarian violence, mostly between rival Sunni and Shi'a Muslim groups, frequently occurred. The Government did not encourage violence; however, there were instances in which the Government failed to intervene in cases of sectarian violence.

*Saudi Arabia.* The Government supports the Sunni majority, and members of the Shi'a minority are subject to officially sanctioned political and economic discrimination. In some cases, they have experienced arbitrary detention and other more severe forms of discrimination. Religious freedom does not exist in the country, and non-Muslims may not worship publicly. However, they may engage in nonpublic worship if they do so discretely. Any attempt to convert Muslims to a non-Muslim religion is a criminal offense. In particular, Catholics and Protestants from Asia have been subject to discrimination and deportation for violating the Government's strict religious regulations.

*Serbia.* Slobodan Milosevic continued to exploit ethnic, religious, and political divisions to maintain his rule. While religion and ethnicity in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia are intertwined closely, the Government continued to suppress religious minorities and provide preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church. In Serbia's sister republic, Montenegro, tensions between the ecclesiastically unofficial Montenegrin Orthodox Church and the officially recognized Serbian Orthodox Church worsened and were politicized by the opposing political factions.

*Sudan.* Against the backdrop of an ongoing civil war, the Muslim-dominated regime continued to persecute members of religious minorities. Christians, practi-

tioners of traditional indigenous religious, and Muslims who deviate from the Government's interpretation of Islam were subject to arbitrary arrest and detention, threats, violence, and forced conversion to Islam. The Government's support of slavery and its continued military action in villages in the Nuba mountains, which resulted in numerous deaths, are due in part to the victims' religious beliefs.

*Turkmenistan.* The Government places significant limits on freedom of religion and religious organizations by requiring that religious groups have 500 members before they may be registered with the Government. Only Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians have enough members to be registered officially, and all other religious groups, including Baha'is, Baptists, Hare Krishnas, Seventh Day Adventists, some Muslims, and Pentecostals, face official harassment. Government interference in unregistered religious activity increased, as officials harassed group members, deported foreigners, denied visa renewals, confiscated religious materials, demolished a Hare Krishna temple and a Seventh Day Adventist church, and allegedly tortured some religious detainees.

*Uzbekistan.* The Government continued a harsh campaign against unauthorized Islamic groups, often failing to distinguish between Islamacist terrorist groups that seek to overthrow the Government by force and other devout Islamic groups, often part of the political opposition. Labeling them a threat to national security, the Government indiscriminately arrested hundreds of members of such groups and sentenced them to lengthy jail terms. Officials frequently used registration requirements to restrict the activity of various religious groups, including some Christians and some Muslim groups. Law enforcement officials harassed and tortured prisoners, including members of unapproved religious organizations, and manufactured false evidence against them.

#### STATE NEGLECT OF THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST, OR PERSECUTION OF, MINORITY OR NONAPPROVED RELIGIONS

In some countries, governments have laws or policies to discourage religious discrimination and persecution but fail to act with sufficient consistency and vigor against violations of religious freedom by nongovernmental entities or local law enforcement officials.

*Egypt.* In Egypt members of the non-Muslim minority generally worship without interference, but there is some societal and governmental discrimination. Almost 100 persons, including members of the Faramawy religious group, were arrested and charged with heresy against Islam. Some were convicted and sentenced. Violent exchanges between Christians and Muslims in Al-Kush, culminating in early January 2000, resulted in the death of 21 Christians and 1 Muslim; many more were wounded. The Government indicted 135 people for the violence and took steps to compensate the victims. Some members of the Christian community acknowledge that the Government has become somewhat more responsive but still argue that, despite improvements, the approval process for church construction remains slow and cumbersome.

*India.* Attacks on religious minorities were less intense during the reporting period but more widespread. They included assaults on Christian clerics and pilgrims and bomb and arson attacks on churches. Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh villagers and Hindu pilgrims and laborers were killed in conjunction with the ongoing conflict in Kashmir. The central Government condemned the attacks and called for tolerance, but the response of local law enforcement officials often was inadequate.

*Indonesia.* Religious intolerance contributed to intercommunal violence in several regions, particularly in the Maluku provinces (also known as the Moluccas) and Central Sulawesi. Official statistics record that over 2,470 persons were killed in the Moluccas strife since violence erupted in January 1999. The victims were divided about equally between Christians and Muslims. The Government responded slowly and ineffectively, and many accuse the military and police forces of bias (against both Christians and Muslims, respectively) and complicit in the violence in Maluku.

Churches and other Christian facilities continued to be attacked in Java, where Muslims are a majority, although not to the extent experienced in 1996–97.

*Nigeria.* The new civilian government's ability to enforce respect for religious freedom and to prevent violence between Muslims and non-Muslims was tested in January 2000 when some northern states began formally adopting Islamic law, or Shari'a, as their legal system. The adoption of Shari'a triggered interreligious violence in February and March, during which hundreds of Christians and Muslims were killed. The central Government continued to work with the northern states and with the various factions to foster religious freedom, but the potential for further violence remains great.

## DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION OR POLICIES DISADVANTAGING CERTAIN RELIGIONS

Some governments have implemented laws or regulations that favor certain religions and place others at a disadvantage. Often this circumstance is the result of the historical predominance of one religion in a country and may reflect broad social skepticism about new or minority religions. Sometimes it stems from the emergence of a country from a long period of Communist rule, in which all religion was prohibited or at best out of favor. In such countries, skepticism or even the fear of certain religions or all religions lingers within segments of society. This circumstance led in some cases to a curtailment of religious freedom.

*Armenia.* The national church in Armenia—the Armenia Apostolic Church—is not subject to some of the restrictions on religious freedom that are imposed on other religious organizations that must register with the Government. Jehovah’s Witnesses continue to have their application for legal recognition rejected because of their “illegal proselytism.” Members report individual acts of discrimination, although there is no discernable pattern of persecution.

*Belarus.* The Government openly favors the Belarusian Orthodox Church (which was designated as an Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1989) and has stepped up its harassment of all other religious groups. Some of these “nontraditional” religions, including many Protestant denominations, some Eastern religions, and the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, repeatedly have been denied registration by the Government, effectively denying them the ability to obtain property on which to conduct religious services. The Government promulgates false accusations against some minority faiths through state-owned newspapers and places restrictions on and regularly intimidates domestic and foreign religious leaders.

*Bulgaria.* The attitude of the Government generally has been positive in encouraging greater religious tolerance since early 1998. Although religious freedom improved for some nontraditional groups, others faced official disfavor and persistent government refusal to grant registration. Some groups also continue to face discrimination and antipathy from some local governments. The national government has not taken any action to dissuade local governments from such infringements of religious freedom. There also was concern about a new law on religion introduced into the National Assembly, which was in committee in the summer of 2000. Some religious groups and the U.S. Government have urged the Bulgarian government to revise those provisions that have the potential to give the Government excessive control over religious affairs.

*Eritrea.* The Government singled out members of Jehovah’s Witnesses for harsh treatment because of their refusal to participate in national service and other civic duties. Jehovah’s Witnesses and others, including some Muslims, were subject to imprisonment for refusing to perform national service; however, only members of Jehovah’s Witnesses are subject to dismissal from the civil service and often are denied identification cards, exit visas, trading licenses, and government housing.

*Israel.* Most non-Jewish citizens are Arab Muslims, and they are subject to various forms of discrimination. The Government does not provide Israeli Arabs with the same quality of education, housing, employment opportunities, and social services as Jews. Government spending and financial support are proportionally far lower in predominately non-Jewish areas than in Jewish areas. Evangelical Christians and other religious groups have complained in the past that the police have been slow to investigate incidents of harassment, threats, and vandalism directed against their meetings, churches, and other facilities by two ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups.

*Jordan.* Government officials in Jordan still have not registered the Jordan Evangelical (Christian) Theological Seminary. Pending such registration, authorities suspended the renewal of the residence permits of all of the seminary’s 36 foreign students (who come from 10 foreign countries), and 2 members of the faculty.

*Malaysia.* The Government significantly restricts the Shi’a minority from practicing its faith and places some restrictions on the activities of political opponents in mosques. It is very difficult for Muslims legally to change their religion. In April the state of Perlis passed a Shari’a law subjecting Islamic “deviants” and apostates to 1 year of “rehabilitation.”

*Romania.* The Government generally does not impede the observance of religious beliefs. However, several religious groups allege that the Government delayed or impeded their attempts to acquire property, building permits, and other documents and to register as a religious group. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses’ organization, some local officials in Romania provided tacit support to Orthodox Christian clergy intent on barring Jehovah’s Witnesses from practicing their faith.

*Russia.* National and local officials are working to enforce a restrictive 1997 law on religion that replaced a more liberal 1990 law; however, there is some confusion

regarding the new law, and its provisions have been applied inconsistently. The 1997 legislation distinguishes between religious organizations and groups, affording each a separate legal status that in effect created a hierarchy of religions and restricted the rights and privileges of newer and small religious communities. The required registration of religious groups and organizations at the local level is progressing slowly in some regions. Moreover, those that have not registered by December 31, 2000, are subject to organizational liquidation by the Government. Uneven implementation of the law and contradictory interpretations of the law and of other federal and local regulations permitted discriminatory practices by some regional and local governments. Many religious groups and organizations, both registered and unregistered, face discrimination and harassment by some government authorities. Federal officials, for the most part, have not taken sufficient action to address these concerns. For example, measures were taken to restrict the activities of a number of foreign missionaries and congregations associated with them. Four U.S. missionaries were refused visas to return to the country. Dan Pollard (formerly of the Vanino Baptist Church in the Khabarovsk region) was banned from receiving a visa on allegations that he violated customs regulations and evaded property taxes, a questionable charge given the role of local authorities in preventing him from complying with the law.

*Turkey.* The Government continued to impose some restrictions on religious minorities and on religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities. A 50-year-old ban on the wearing of religious head garments in government offices and other state-run facilities continued to be enforced. Police detained or stopped Christians holding services in private apartments and those considered to be proselytizing. The Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary has remained closed since 1971, when the state nationalized all private institutions of higher learning.

#### STIGMATIZATION OF CERTAIN RELIGIONS BY WRONGFULLY ASSOCIATING THEM WITH DANGEROUS "CULTS" OR "SECTS"

*Austria.* The Government of Austria intensified its ongoing information campaign against religious groups that it considers to be harmful to the interests of individuals and society. A brochure issued by the Government in September 1999 described several nonrecognized groups, as well as Jehovah's Witnesses, in decidedly negative terms that many found offensive.

*Belgium.* In 1998 the Parliament adopted several recommendations from a Commission report on government policy toward "sects," including the creation of a center that would report on "Harmful Sectarian Organizations." Even though the word "sect" has assumed pejorative connotations in modern usage, the report noted that it employed the term in the traditional sense—a group of organized persons espousing the same doctrine within a religion.

*Czech Republic.* In August 2000, the Government approved a proposal for a new bill on the registration and status of religious organizations that copies the restrictive Austrian model.

*France.* A 1996 National Assembly report, as well as a followup 1999 parliamentary report, labeled 173 groups as "sects" (a more precise English translation of the French in this instance would be "cults"), actions which contributed to an atmosphere of intolerance toward minority religions. A few of the groups on the list are clearly dangerous, but most are merely unfamiliar or unpopular. Members of some groups that appear on the list continue to allege government and societal discrimination. Private legislation to update and toughen existing laws invoked to deal with cults, including a controversial provision defining the crime of "mental manipulation," was introduced in the Senate in December 1999 and passed in amended form on a first reading by the National Assembly in June 2000. The competing versions of the bill have to be reconciled before final passage, although this action may not occur before mid-2001, given the current legislative calendar. The Minister of Justice further requested that the Senate, when it takes up the bill in the fall of 2000, consider a parallel reflection on how this legislation affects the constitutionally protected freedom of belief and the country's obligations under European and other international human rights conventions.

*Germany.* Many officials in the Government believe that the Church of Scientology is a money-making scheme rather than a religion, and they have continued to investigate the Church and to warn of its "totalitarian tendencies." The continued official "observation" of the Church by the Government, without any resulting legal action, created an environment that encourages discrimination. Some employers refuse to hire Scientologists, and government procurement procedures sometimes include so-called sect filters designed to screen out members of the Church.

## Part II: Improvements in International Religious Freedom

The International Religious Freedom Act prescribes a section of the Executive Summary that identifies foreign countries in which there has been a “significant improvement in the protection and promotion of” religious freedom and includes a description of the nature of the improvement as well as an analysis of the factors contributing to it. This report identifies two countries in which improvements during the reporting period have been significant and several others in which improvements have been noteworthy.

It also should be noted that, as elaborated elsewhere in the Executive Summary and in the country report chapters, there remain significant problems of religious discrimination or abuse in some of the countries in which improvements have occurred. It is our hope that such countries will intensify the kinds of improvements cited in this section.

Further information on actions by the U.S. Government in these countries also may be found in the respective country chapters.

### SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Two countries have shown “significant” improvements in religious freedom. In neither of these countries do the improvements represent a fundamental alteration in what otherwise remains a poor human rights record. However, in both the improvement has been striking enough to raise the hope that it represents the first step in a more systematic change. The improvements for these two countries are highlighted in order to encourage additional positive steps.

One country where religious freedom made significant improvement is Azerbaijan. *Azerbaijan.* Since the end of the Cold War, many countries of the former Soviet Union sought international integration, while simultaneously addressing problems of internal and external security. These countries understand that their goals of democratic and economic development necessitate not only “membership-in-good-standing” in such institutions as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, and the Council of Europe, but also adherence to international norms of human rights. These goals are threatened by government-sanctioned or tolerated abuses of human rights, including religious freedom. Moreover, in an age of global communications, where news of arrests, imprisonment, beatings, and torture are instantaneously communicated around the world, governments no longer control information. The misdeeds of officials are phoned, faxed, e-mailed, and sometimes broadcast to an interested foreign and domestic public.

Unfortunately, such communications continue to be necessary. Some countries of the former Soviet Union have failed to cut their ties to antidemocratic institutions and practices inherited from the Soviet system. In these nations, many local and regional officials tend to be unimpressed with the value of membership in the international community. Sometimes real security problems have led to excesses against religious minorities. However, in some countries the national leadership increasingly sees the advantages of improvements in religious freedom. At least some of the elite realizes not only that religious persecution is incompatible with international norms, but that foreign companies will not invest where employees and families are at risk of abuse because of their religious practices. This realization has apparently led to improvements in some countries, although it has not necessarily been reflected in improvements in other areas of respect for human rights.

Until the late fall of 1999, the Government of Azerbaijan and local law enforcement officials frequently used the Law on Religious Freedom and other laws to restrict religious activity by foreigners and nontraditional religious groups. For example, in the early fall of 1999, police and security officials detained, imprisoned, and beat clergy, threatened to deport foreign religious workers, and used the forum of an assembly at a state factory publicly to humiliate and fire workers of a nontraditional religion.

The Ambassador and other officials of the U.S. Government and the international community called this situation to the attention of President Aliyev and other high-level officials. Aliyev consulted his ministers and then publicly pledged to improve the status of religious minorities and to adhere to the country’s own constitutional standards and international commitments. Since the President’s announcement in November 1999, deportation orders and other charges against clergy and groups of religious minorities have been overturned, many religious groups have been allowed to register for the first time, the factory workers were reinstated in their jobs, and respect for religious freedom has improved. Further, a local law enforcement official was punished for his role in abuses against a religious minority. Although problems remain, Azerbaijan’s willingness to adhere to its constitutional and international

commitments to respect religious freedom represents a significant improvement in the status quo.

*Laos.* After the end of the Vietnam War, the Communist authorities imposed a repressive regime that severely limited basic human rights. Because believers of a number of minority faiths historically had opposed the Communist takeover and sometimes continued to oppose the Government, such faiths were viewed with suspicion as security threats. This attitude was true particularly in the case of a number of minority ethnic groups living in strategically sensitive border areas. Members of these ethnic groups often belonged predominantly or significantly to minority religions. Furthermore, Christianity was viewed as a remnant of the former colonial power and Christians were considered to be agents of suspect “Western” influences. These attitudes, coupled with standard Communist ideological opposition to religion, contributed to widespread oppression of the religious faithful. Independent religious structures were suppressed as possible sources of organized opposition to the Government.

More recently, economic stagnation and the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union encouraged economic liberalization. Longstanding hostility to the United States began to ebb, and there was increased interest in attracting economic assistance and private investment from the West in general and from the United States in particular. Economic liberalization led to better communications with the outside world, including via the Internet. Human rights abuses were more apt to be publicized abroad. Many abuses were committed by local and regional authorities with varying degrees of independence from the central Government. Increasingly, the central government was willing to engage in human rights dialogue with other countries on the basis of international standards and agreements. All of these forces—economic liberalization, better communications, human rights dialogue—fostered improvements in human rights and religious freedom.

The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom met during 1999 with high-ranking officials of the Government in Vientiane and with the Laotian Ambassador in Washington to express concern at the plight of Christians who were imprisoned because of their faith. Embassy officers in Laos also held discussions on the matter with their counterparts. In mid-2000 many of the prisoners were released. While serious impediments to religious freedom remain in Laos, their release constitutes a significant improvement and demonstrates a willingness on the part of the central Government to intervene with local and provincial authorities when the latter abridge the religious liberties of minorities.

#### NOTEWORTHY IMPROVEMENTS IN RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

There have been other improvements in religious freedom worldwide which merit attention. They are as follows:

*Bulgaria.* The Government officially approved registration of the Nazarene Church, which had been attempting to register for over 5 years.

*Chile.* On July 6, 1999, the Senate approved a new religious law (“ley de culto”). Among other provisions, it bestows the same legal status (“derecho publico”) on all other faiths that the Catholic Church previously enjoyed. The legislation entered into effect in March 2000. The revision removed the legal possibility of other faiths having their status challenged administratively.

*Croatia.* The Government enacted constitutional amendments in May that added Bosnian Muslims and Albanians to the list of officially recognized minorities. Muslims were removed from the list by the previous government in 1998. The newly elected Government has shown an interest in improving religious freedom, and, to date, religious leaders are cautiously optimistic.

*Czech Republic.* A new draft bill on religion was pending in the legislature of the Czech Republic in mid-2000. The bill, which was drafted with the input of various church representatives, would facilitate the ability of religious groups to be recognized legally. It would lower the number of signatures required to grant a religious organization legal status from 10,000 to 300.

*Dominican Republic.* Church leaders report that they have noticed increased political freedom for religious minorities. In particular the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Jehovah’s Witnesses report improved relations with the Government.

*Egypt.* Egyptian Copts were appointed to senior political party positions during the reporting period, and some observers noted an increased representation of Christians in public and political life. A December 1999 decree by President Hosni Mubarak provided that all places of worship be subject to the same civil construction code. The decree has had the effect of facilitating church repairs. The Government’s response to sectarian violence against Christians also improved. After an

outbreak of sectarian violence in the village of Al-Kush over the New Year, the Government responded quickly to restore order. A criminal court in Sohag city indicted 135 people for the violence, and the trials are ongoing.

*France.* The highest administrative court in France, the Council of State, ruled in June 2000 that Jehovah's Witnesses qualify as a religion. The ruling exempted Jehovah's Witnesses from property taxes levied against their houses of worship. The Government also acknowledged Islam as a state-recognized religion, a status which is expected, among other things, to lead to the release of state funds for building mosques.

*The Gambia.* In contrast to previous years, there were no reports of persecution against members of the Ahmadis or against any other religious group.

*Germany.* The Government enacted a series of positive legal reforms. The Federal Administrative Court ruled that the public law corporation status of a religious community may not be used to deny it the right to provide religious instruction in public schools, nor religious chaplaincies in the military, in hospitals, or in prisons.

*Ghana.* The Government was more active in addressing religious conflicts than in past years. In addition to outlawing religious slavery, the Government sponsored an interfaith forum to address religious conflicts and has taken a more active role in mediating interreligious disputes.

*Greece.* In June 2000, the Parliament approved a bill allowing the construction of the first Islamic cultural center and mosque in modern times in the Athens area. In July 2000 the Government completed plans to eliminate references to religious affiliation on official identification cards, which may help to protect individuals from discrimination.

*Indonesia.* In January 2000, President Wahid issued a decree lifting restrictions in effect since 1967 on the practice of Confucianism. For the first time in over 30 years, Confucianists—mainly Indonesians associated with the Chinese minority—were permitted to celebrate the Chinese New Year publicly and to practice openly their religious customs.

*Iran.* The Government announced that couples may register their marriage without declaring their religious affiliation. This is the first major step made by the Government toward religious freedom since the 1979 revolution. Members of the Baha'i community are likely to benefit most from the change.

*Israel.* The successful March 2000 visit of the Pope contributed to increased religious tolerance in Israel. In March the High Court of Justice ruled that the Government's use of the Jewish National Fund to develop public land was discriminatory; that organization's bylaws prohibit the sale or lease of land to non-Jews. In June 2000, the Government proposed a plan to redress spending for non-Jewish areas, which was substantially below that in predominantly Jewish areas. Finally, harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses declined in 2000.

*Kuwait.* The Government agreed to allow the Vatican to establish a permanent mission in the country. The Catholic Church views the approval as a significant development and indicative of increased tolerance of Christianity by the government of Kuwait.

*Latvia.* The government effectively has eased visa restrictions on foreign missionaries. New visa regulations came into effect in July 1999, and the Government has cooperated to resolve several difficult visa cases in favor of missionary workers.

*Malaysia.* Charges were dropped against Muslim women who were arrested for being on premises where liquor is served. While it is an offense for a Muslim to drink liquor, it is not an offense to be in a place that serves liquor. The central Government strongly criticized the arrests.

*Netherlands.* The Equal Opportunities Committee took several steps to reduce employment discrimination on the basis of religion. The Committee ruled in July 1999 that wearing headscarves for religious reasons may be banned only on serious grounds, such as security considerations. The Committee also ruled that employers must take account of reasonable religious demands from their employees, such as requests by Muslims for leave on Fridays or by Christians for leave on Sundays.

*Philippines.* There was enhanced cooperation between Christian and Muslim leaders in Mindanao. This cooperation gained more publicity because of the upswing in violent clashes between militant Muslim insurgent groups and government security forces. Religious leaders hope to contribute to a climate of peaceful resolution of the underlying economic and ethnic problems in Mindanao.

*Qatar.* The construction of the first Christian church in Qatar was approved. Previously, the Qatar authorities prohibited the public practice of any religion except the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam.

*Romania.* Foreign religious representatives experienced less discrimination in the processing of visa extensions. The State Secretary for Religious Denominations made it much easier for religious associations and foundations to receive building

permits. A government decree effective May 2000 promises to reduce substantially bureaucratic hindrances to the registration of religious organizations by removing minimum requirements for numbers of members necessary to establish religious associations and foundations. A law was adopted entitling religious denominations to reclaim by legal means property seized during the Communist era. Three court rulings upheld the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists to build places of worship and practice their faith. The Government sent a new, restrictive Draft Law on Religions to Parliament in September 1999. Responding to concerns by the Department of State and the international community, the Government formally withdrew the legislation in January 2000. The Government currently is engaged in discussions with a wide range of religious representatives to formulate a new law based on democratic principles.

*Russia.* Responding to concerns by the Department of State, one of Russia's regional governments decided in November 1999 to allow the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to take part in the official registration process. This action followed repeated denials of the church's petition for registration by the regional government. Several weeks later the Government announced that it would register all religious groups under their present charters, including the local Roman Catholic parish.

*Saudi Arabia.* Government officials reaffirmed publicly, in domestic and international forums, e.g., at the 56th session of the U.N. Committee on Human Rights in April 2000, the right of non-Muslims to worship privately. These statements, published in the local press, created a greater societal awareness of the Government's decision to allow non-Islamic private worship. Observers note that, in spite of several recent actions by the Government against Christians engaged in private worship, non-Islamic freedom to worship privately received more attention and greater respect than in the past.

*Slovakia.* The Government took modest steps to improve religious freedom through changes in primary and secondary educational curriculums designed to combat anti-Semitism and through a national conference on racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and intolerance.

*Sudan.* Some religious prisoners and detainees were released, including Faki Koko, who allegedly was held for apostasy, Father Hillary Boma, and Father Lino Sebit. The Public Order Courts were abolished, the enforcement of public order law was relaxed, and women imprisoned under that law were released. Restrictions on religious visitors and gatherings were eased. The Government's Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children identified hundreds of abductees (mostly Christians or practitioners of traditional indigenous religions) and returned many of them to their families.

*Taiwan.* The Government no longer places restrictions on registering new religions if they meet the legal requirements for civic organizations. Under the new rules, three religions were registered in 1999. A new law allows a civilian alternative to military service for those who are conscientious objectors. In the past, Jehovah's Witnesses and other minority religious adherents were imprisoned for failing to follow orders while in military service.

*Tajikistan.* A national referendum amended the Constitution to allow for religiously oriented political parties. Two representatives of one such party were elected to the new parliament.

*Turkey.* In June 2000, Ankara's Supreme Court approved the establishment of a Christian foundation for a Turkish Protestant church.

*Ukraine.* The Government revised its visa policy in May 2000, announcing that invitations are no longer required for visa issuance to citizens of the United States, Canada, the European Union (EU), and Japan. While the change greatly simplifies religious tourist travel to Ukraine, religious workers still must obtain special visas that are issued only by invitation. The Government continued its plan to return properties that had been seized during the Communist era to religious groups. In addition some nontraditional religious organizations reported an increase in government cooperation, especially in regards to registration. President Kuchma made a number of symbolic gestures promoting religious freedom. He spoke frequently and publicly about the need for ethnic and religious tolerance, spoke out against anti-Semitism, and attended several high-profile religious services.

*Uzbekistan.* Until August of 1999, six Christians—in cases receiving a high profile in the international religious press—were imprisoned on fabricated narcotics charges because of their religious activities. Also, some 20 congregations of religious believers were unable to register because of obstruction by local officials. Moreover, throughout the reporting period, the Government arrested hundreds of alleged members of unauthorized Islamic groups. Beginning in August 1999, the Government responded to international diplomatic engagement and began to make a con-



certed effort to improve respect for the religious freedom of Christians and members of other minority religious groups. However, respect for unauthorized Muslim groups worsened, as the Government intensified its harsh campaign against such groups, which it perceived as a continuing security threat. There is little question that some devout Muslims, identified as dangerous solely because of their religion, were adversely affected.

In contrast to the government's treatment of unauthorized Muslim groups, members of most Christian communities reported a significant increase in government cooperation and tolerance, although there were still reports of harassment by local officials against some Christian communities. The President pardoned the six imprisoned Christians. The Government also registered over 25 non-Muslim religious groups whose applications were blocked by local officials, including several that were technically below the required membership level to qualify under the restrictive religious freedom law. In the latter case, the groups were sought out and "invited" to register, an unprecedented show of goodwill.

Finally, the Government held an international conference of experts to examine the shortcomings of the law on religion, indicating its intention to use this as a basis for corrective legislation based on the recommendations of the conference. On May 25, the day after the Ambassador at Large met with Uzbek officials, President Karimov suggested that the Parliament consider improvement of the religion law.

*Vietnam.* Most of the serious restrictions of religious freedom in Vietnam remained in place. However, there was a decrease in official interference with religious practice, especially for officially recognized groups, such as Catholics and Buddhists. Most of the imprisoned 25 Christian Hmong church leaders were released, as were 3 Catholic priests. Officials of the central Government demonstrated some willingness to investigate reports of abuses by local and provincial authorities and to take action against those authorities.

### **Part III: U.S. Actions to Promote International Religious Freedom**

As noted in the 1998–99 report, the promotion of religious freedom involves far more than public airing of violations. The most productive work often is done behind the scenes, for a very simple reason: no government or nation is likely to respond positively when publicly rebuked.

However, it is sometimes necessary for the United States, and the international community, to denounce particularly abhorrent behavior by another nation openly. The 1998 International Religious Freedom Act mandates certain actions in cases of particularly severe violations of religious freedom. In October 1999, the Secretary of State (acting under the authority of the President) designated five countries as "countries of particular concern" under the Act for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations. They are Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan. In addition the Secretary identified Serbia and the Taliban regime of Afghanistan (not "countries under the Act") as having committed particularly severe violations.

Religious freedom is one of the fundamental human rights provided for in international covenants. In general the best public method of promoting religious freedom is to advocate the universal principles—in particular the inviolable dignity of the human person—that are nourished when religious freedom is valued and protected. This approach continues to be integrated into public U.S. foreign policy channels, through international exchanges, Worldnet and Voice of America broadcasts, a religious freedom web site in the home page of the Department of State, conferences, public opinion polling, Congressional hearings, and speeches and press conferences by senior U.S. foreign policy officials. While U.S. public diplomacy efforts will continue to develop, the following pages indicate some of the progress that has been made.

Central to the integration of religious freedom into the fabric of U.S. policy is the training of U.S. officials most likely to encounter those persecuted because of their religious beliefs: The consular officer in a U.S. Embassy who interviews a refugee applicant; the U.S. political officer seeking information on a prisoner; the asylum official at a U.S. airport hearing the plea of a woman fleeing religious persecution, and the interpreter who must render her foreign tongue into English with precision and sympathy; and the U.S. immigration judge who must hear the case of the alien in danger of being returned to his country, and into harm's way, because of his religious beliefs.

It is, in part, with these U.S. officials that the success or failure of our religious freedom policy lies. Some of their efforts are highlighted in the following pages; others can be found in the Appendices to this report, which detail efforts of the Departments of State and Justice to institutionalize training for their personnel in areas critical to promoting religious freedom abroad.

Finally, it bears repeating that the United States seeks to promote religious freedom abroad, not simply to criticize, or to make headlines. There are many paths to this end, some of them involving the difficult work of scrutinizing legal documents and draft legislation, mastering the history and culture of diverse societies, and understanding religious beliefs and practices alien to our own. Some paths involve risk, particularly when the objective is to liberate the prisoner, to stop the torture, or to stay the execution. Such vital work usually is done out of the limelight, often without acknowledgement, and occasionally without knowing its result.

But the work must, and does, take place. It happens when a Foreign Service Officer, sometimes at the risk of safety, presses authorities to know where the priest has been taken and why. It happens when an ambassador, while discussing with a senior official his country's important strategic relationship with the United States, seeks access to the imprisoned mufti or information on the missionary who has disappeared. It happens when senior U.S. officials, responsible for balancing and pursuing all of America's vital national interests, make it clear that a single persecuted human being, perhaps obscure and insignificant in the grand affairs of state, matters to the world's most powerful nation.

#### THE YEAR IN REVIEW

During the period covered by this report—July 1999 through June 2000—the United States has engaged in a variety of efforts to promote the right of religious freedom and to oppose violations of that right. Its front line in pursuing these goals has been our overseas Missions—the embassies, consulates general, and consulates of the United States. Frequently the Chief of Mission has led the way, as have other members of the country team.

U.S. Mission efforts inevitably are centered on human rights officers, as well as consular officers, who serve as the eyes and ears of the mission in its search for information and its voice in the advocacy of religious freedom. Their work is facilitated by the wisdom and practical knowledge of local national embassy staff colleagues, whose contributions to international religious freedom frequently advance the interests of the United States. Public affairs officers coordinate the vital work of public diplomacy in order to present U.S. policy with accuracy and thoroughness. This work requires clear explanations both of the “American approach” (when asked or when useful) to religious freedom in the United States and of the U.S. practice of applying only international standards in its assessment of foreign governments.

No less important is the tone and context set by senior U.S. officials when they speak publicly on the subject of religious freedom, or privately with foreign heads of government and other policy makers. The President, the Secretary of State, and many of her senior staff have addressed the issue in venues throughout the world. Within the United States, the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service play a critical role as the agencies responsible for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers who are fleeing religious persecution. The Department of State is responsible for training some officials who interview refugee applicants; the Department of Justice is responsible for training officials who interview both refugee and asylum applicants and those who adjudicate their cases (see Appendices).

The fulcrum of the effort to promote religious freedom lies in a State Department office established in the summer of 1998 and further mandated by the International Religious Freedom Act—the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The office is headed by an Ambassador at Large, Robert Seiple, who serves as the principal advisor to the President and the Secretary of State on religious freedom. As such the Ambassador at Large recommends U.S. policies on religious freedom abroad and oversees the implementation of those policies. The Ambassador has begun the task of integrating U.S. policy on religious freedom into the mainstream of U.S. foreign policy, and—at the same time—into the structure of the Foreign Service and the Department of State.

The Secretary of State, through the Offices of International Religious Freedom and Country Reports and Asylum Affairs (both in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor), is responsible for preparing the annual report to Congress on the status of religious freedom worldwide. In carrying out this task, the Bureau draws on U.S. mission reporting, visits by the Ambassador at Large and his staff to individual countries, participation in multilateral meetings and conferences, and on evidence provided by religious and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), religious organizations and individuals. Monitoring and reporting are also guided by the recommendations and annual report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) established in the 1998 Act.

The following section summarizes some of the many efforts undertaken by various elements of the U.S. Government's foreign policy community to promote religious freedom. It is by no means exhaustive, but it endeavors to provide by way of example a realistic portrait of U.S. actions. Further details may be found in the individual country reports.

The following acronyms are used in the text: IRF, International Religious Freedom, and USCIRF, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

*Armenia.* In September 1999, embassy officials met with the Military Prosecutor to discuss, among other topics, hazing of minority conscripts and the status of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Embassy also maintains regular contact with traveling regional representatives of foreign-based religious groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and raises their concerns with Armenian officials.

*Austria.* The Ambassador and other members of the Embassy met regularly with religious and political leaders to reinforce the U.S. Government's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance. They have met repeatedly with the leader of the Jewish community in Austria and the head of the Lutheran church in Burgenland regarding the threats against them and their concerns about the new Government. Following these threats, the Ambassador met with Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel to convey the concerns of the U.S. Government. The Ambassador also raised concerns about a government Minister's intentions to enhance the role of the office on sects. In May 2000, the Ambassador participated in the annual commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust at Matthausen concentration camp. She followed this with a speech on diversity and tolerance at a program for second-generation immigrants. In April the Ambassador hosted an event at the residence featuring Congressman Tom Lantos, a Holocaust survivor. This included members of the government, religious leaders, and other opinion makers. It focused on religious and racial tolerance, including a screening of a documentary on holocaust survivors. In February the Ambassador hosted a benefit conference to raise money for the renovation of St. Stephen's cathedral, at which she focused on ecumenical partnerships to combat intolerance. Following a December 1999 unveiling of a statue symbolizing tolerance, the Ambassador hosted a reception for government officials and representatives from NGO's concerned with minorities, tolerance, and issues of genocide prevention.

In addition, in June 2000, Ambassador Seiple testified before House International Relations Committee about religious freedom issues in Austria, including concerns about the Government's information campaign against religious groups that it considers harmful to the interests of individuals and society.

*Afghanistan.* In October 1999, the Secretary of State designated the Taliban regime, which controls most of Afghanistan as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

*Azerbaijan.* U.S. engagement was significant in the fall of 1999 in response to a crackdown on religious activity by government officials. After police broke up a Baptist service in Baku and detained 60 congregants, on September 5, embassy officials were called by local worshipers to meet with detainees, police, and security officials at the police station. Throughout the ensuing week, embassy officers attended court hearings for two Azerbaijani pastors and eight foreigners arrested as a result of the police action. Other religious groups quickly reported similar incidents of harassment, and the Embassy carefully pursued each report with those groups and with the central Government. Throughout the fall, the Embassy maintained regular contact with government officials and local religious groups to monitor the situation and promote a resolution consistent with the country's constitutional standards of religious freedom. In addition, in October 1999, an IRF office staff member visited the country to express U.S. concern to the Government and to the local groups affected by the arrests and harassment.

The U.S. Ambassador met with the Ministers of Interior, Justice, and National Security, as well as the Prosecutor General, to express U.S. Government concerns over this pattern of incidents, characterizing them as violations of standards of religious freedom of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as well as of the Azerbaijani constitution. On November 3, Ambassador Escudero personally delivered a letter from several Congressmen to President Aliyev expressing concern over the incidents. On November 8, President Aliyev publicly reiterated his country's full commitment to constitutional and OSCE standards of religious freedom and ordered his government to resolve immediately all reported problems.

*Belarus.* On April 13, the Ambassador sent a letter to the governor of the Brest Oblast and the Ministry of Foreign affairs urging a resolution of the conflict concerning Catholic priest Zbeigniew Karoljak, following a meeting in Brest with Karoljak's parishioners.

*Belgium.* Embassy officers met with high-level government officials and conducted active measures to assist in resolving outstanding complaints of religious discrimination. In June 2000, Ambassador Seiple testified before the House International Relations Committee about religious freedom issues, including the Belgian Government's policy towards "sects" and the creation of a "Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations."

*Bosnia and Herzegovina.* In March 2000, Ambassador Seiple visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and met with Government officials, NGO's, and religious leaders to discuss religious freedom issues.

*Bulgaria.* The Ambassador, embassy officers, and visiting State Department officials met with a diverse cross-section of relevant government officials and Members of Parliament to advocate a liberal approach to religious freedom under a new law on religion. In March an IRF officer visited Sofia to meet with NGO's and with embassy officers regarding the draft law. Embassy officers have kept in close touch with human rights and religious groups to remain attuned to their concerns about the proposed law. The U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE raised this point with Bulgaria's OSCE ambassador, and the State Department also raised this issue in the context of the Stability Pact. Embassy officers have met with Orthodox clergy from both sides of the schism, with the chief mufti of the Muslim community, with religious and lay leaders of the Jewish community, as well as with the leaders of numerous Protestant denominations.

*Burma.* In October 1999, the Secretary of State designated Burma a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. The United States discontinued bilateral aid to the Government, suspended the issuance of licenses to export arms to Burma, suspended the Generalized System of Preferences for Burma, suspended tariff preference for imports of Burmese origin, and suspended Export-Import Bank financial services in support of U.S. exports to Burma. The U.S. Government also has not provided any Overseas Private Investment Corporation financial services in support of U.S. investment in Burma, suspended active promotion of trade with Burma, suspended issuance of visas to high government officials and their immediate family members, banned new investment by U.S. firms, opposed all assistance to the Government by international financial institutions, and urged the governments of other countries to take similar actions.

The U.S. Government actively supported the decision of the International Labor Organization (ILO), in June 1999, to suspend the Government of Burma from participation in ILO programs, based in part on an August 1998 ILO Commission of Inquiry report that the Government systematically used forced labor for a wide range of civilian and military purposes.

The U.S. Embassy has promoted religious freedom in the overall context of its promotion of human rights generally in numerous contacts with government officials (both informally and through repeated formal demarches), as well as to the public, to representatives of the governments of other countries and of international organizations, to international media representatives, to scholars, and to representatives of U.S. and international businesses. Embassy staff members met repeatedly with leaders of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic religious groups, members of the faculties of schools of theology, and other religious-affiliated organizations and NGO's as part of their reporting and public diplomacy activities.

*China.* In October 1999, the Secretary of State designated China as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

The U.S. Embassy and consulates collected information about abuses and maintained contacts in China's religious communities with a wide spectrum of religious leaders including bishops, priests, ministers of the official Christian churches, and Taoist and Buddhist leaders. Embassy officials continued, for example, to seek clarification about the status of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin. On numerous occasions, senior U.S. Government officials in Washington and in China protested government actions taken against Falun Gong followers, including the temporary detention of thousands of adherents in July 1999 and the sentencing of four group leaders later in that year. In May 2000, senior embassy officers urged the Chinese to release Pastor Xu Yongze, whose "reeducation through labor" sentence expired in March 2000. Consulate Guangzhou officers also protested to local officials the detention and harassment of Pastor Li Dexian. State Department officials met with senior Chinese Embassy officers in Washington to protest the January detention of Roman Catholic Bishop Yang Shudao. Diplomatic personnel also traveled to Tibet to monitor conditions, including the status of religious freedom. Cases raised by the

Embassy include those of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama; Abbot Chadrel Rinpoche; Ngawang Sangdrol; and other Tibetan monks and nuns. Other embassy officers raised specific cases in meetings with officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department.

The Department of State sent Chinese religious leaders and scholars to the United States on international visitor programs to see first hand the role that religion plays in the United States.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom took a number of actions during the reporting period to express its concerns about religious freedom in China. These included: A press release noting increasing religious persecution in China—including cases of persecution of Muslim Uighurs; public calls on the Chinese Government to end persecution of Falun Gong adherents; urging Chinese cooperation with the Vatican in naming Catholic bishops; and testimony before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, the House Ways and Means Committee, the House International Relations Committee, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In October 1999, Ambassador Seiple testified before the House International Relations Committee and in May 2000 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concerning the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists and the Christian and Muslim communities in China. In March 2000, Ambassador Seiple, accompanied by Rabbi David Saperstein, Chairman of the Commission on International Religious Freedom, held bilateral meetings at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, seeking support for the U.S.-proposed resolution criticizing China's human rights record, including its religious freedom practices.

*Cuba.* The U.S. Interests Section supported various religious leaders and communities in the country and supported NGO initiatives that aid religious groups. The U.S. Government regularly sought to facilitate the issuance of licenses for travel by religious persons and for donated goods and materials. The U.S. Interests Section raised issues of human rights, including religious discrimination and harassment, with government officials. However, the government dismissed these concerns. The Interests Section reported on cases of religious discrimination and harassment, and the U.S. government continuously urged international pressure on the Cuban government to cease its repressive practices.

*Czech Republic.* The Embassy, the Department of State, and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad devoted considerable efforts beginning in December 1999 to facilitate a mutually acceptable settlement of the long-standing dispute over a medieval Jewish cemetery (believed to be the oldest in the Czech Republic) in downtown Prague.

*Egypt.* The U.S. Embassy maintained an active dialog with the leaders of the Christian and Muslim religious communities, human rights groups, and other activists and has investigated every complaint of religious discrimination brought to its attention. The Embassy discussed religious freedom issues with other groups, including academics, businessmen, and lower-income citizens. The Embassy worked to strengthen civil society, including training for nongovernmental groups that promote religious tolerance and provided training to Egyptian police in human rights practices and community policing techniques.

In March 2000, an NGO service center funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) began operating to provide training and technical assistance to local NGO's. The Embassy nominated participants interested in advocacy for the International Visitor Program and invited U.S. specialists in this subject as part of the State Department's speakers program. Other embassy initiatives included activities designed to strengthen the rule of law and promote civic education. The public affairs section of the Embassy supported the development of materials that encourage tolerance, diversity, and understanding of others, in both Arabic-language and English-language curriculums.

USAID, in collaboration with the Children's Television Workshop, developed an Egyptian version of the television program *Sesame Street*, which is designed to reach isolated households and to promote tolerance. The show was scheduled for airing beginning in the summer of 2000. USAID also supported private voluntary organizations that are implementing innovative curriculums in private schools. The public affairs section of the Embassy spearheaded an effort to increase the professionalism of the press, with an emphasis on balanced and responsible coverage. Finally, USAID worked with the Supreme Council of Antiquities to promote the conservation of cultural antiquities, including Islamic, Christian, and Jewish historical sites.

*Eritrea.* The Ambassador and other embassy officers raised the special case of Jehovah's Witnesses with government officials in the President's office, the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs, the High Court, the Ministry of Justice, in media interviews, and in the State Department's human rights report. The Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor also raised the issue with the Eritrean Ambassador.

*France.* In October 1999, Ambassador Seiple and an IRF officer visited France and met with government officials, NGO's, and religious leaders to discuss religious freedom issues. In addition, in June 2000, Ambassador Seiple testified before the House International Relations Committee regarding religious freedom issues in France, including concerns about the creation of the "sect lists."

*Germany.* The U.S. Government has expressed its concerns over allegations of infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation and over the potential for discrimination in international trade posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible Scientology affiliation. U.S. government officials discussed with state and federal German authorities U.S. concerns about the violation of individual rights posed by the use of declarations of Scientology affiliation. U.S. officials frequently made the point that the use of such "filters" to prevent persons from practicing their professions, solely based on their beliefs, is an abuse of their rights, as well as a discriminatory business practice. In June 2000, Ambassador Seiple testified before the House International Relations Committee about the treatment of German Scientologists and the use of "filters."

*India.* The U.S. Embassy continued to promote religious freedom through contact with the country's senior leadership, as well as with state and local officials. The Embassy and consulates regularly report on events and trends that affect religious freedom.

During his state visit, President Clinton spoke about the massacre of Sikhs in Kashmir on March 20, 2000, and called for an end to the violence. In August and September 1999, the U.S. Consul in Chennai expressed concern to Kerala state government officials about the status of Father Anthony Raymond Ceresko's visa application to the chief secretary of Karnataka and about the cancellation of the conference of the Anglican Church (see Section I). In January 2000, Senator Tom Daschle and his delegation raised the issue of religious minorities with Home Minister L.K. Advani during a visit to New Delhi. In February a representative of the State Department discussed minority issues with the National Human Rights Commission in New Delhi. On June 23, 2000, the U.S. Ambassador noted to the press that attacks against Christians are a serious concern.

Embassy officers meet with religious officials to monitor religious freedom on a regular basis. U.S. embassy officers traveled to Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh to assess the situation of religious minorities in those states. Embassy and consulate officials maintained contact with senior leaders of all minority communities. The Embassy also maintains contacts with U.S. residents, including those in the NGO and missionary communities. The NGO community is extremely active with regard to religious freedom, and embassy officers meet with local NGO's to obtain information on religious freedom developments.

*Indonesia.* The U.S. Government publicly expressed concern regarding the inter-communal violence that occurred in various parts of the country. U.S. statements urged the Government to take all necessary measures to prevent bloodshed; to take action against those who initiate violence, while adhering to international standards for the protection of human rights; and to resolve their differences through dialog and negotiation.

With respect to the violence between Christian and Muslim communities in the Moluccas and elsewhere, President Clinton and other senior government officials raised their concerns with their Indonesian counterparts on numerous occasions.

The Ambassador and embassy officers routinely conveyed to government officials at all levels the U.S. view that religious freedom must be respected and fostered. In addition the Ambassador and embassy officers regularly met with leaders of religious communities and traveled widely throughout the country to keep abreast of developments affecting religious freedom.

The public affairs section of the Embassy funded the travel of several persons under the International Visitor Program, as well as exchange visitors, who studied human rights and religion in the United States, among other topics. They included religious and student leaders and legal activists from Aceh, Papua, East Timor, and other locations. The Fulbright Commission in Indonesia funded one senior U.S. scholar to teach comparative religion at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) in Jakarta and a senior U.S. scholar-researcher who studied and taught the role of women in Koranic verse at the same institution.

The U.S. Government also provided significant funding for NGO's that implement projects to promote religious tolerance in various parts of the country.

The Commission on International Religious Freedom took a number of actions during the reporting period to express its concern about religious freedom in the country. These included publicly calling on the Government in January 2000 to restore order in the Maluku after outbreaks of Muslim-Christian strife; Commissioner Archbishop Theodore McCarrick's visit to East Timor and Jakarta in February; and the Commission's July public expression of "deep concerns" about religious violence.

*Iran.* In October 1999, the Secretary of State designated Iran as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

President Clinton made a number of statements regarding the treatment of Iranian religious minorities. The statements included one criticizing the execution of Ruhollah Rowhani, a member of the Baha'i Faith, in June 1998 and a statement calling on the Government to exonerate 13 members of the Jewish community arrested in June 1999. The Secretary of State also called on the Government to release and drop charges against the 13 Jews, 10 of whom were still in prison as of June 2000. In February the USCIRF publicly called for the nullification of death sentences for three Baha'is in Mashhad.

*Iraq.* In October 1999, the Secretary of State designated Iraq as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

*Israel.* In December 1999, Ambassador Seiple visited Israel and met with Government officials, NGO's, religious leaders, and others to discuss a number of religious freedom issues including allegations of persecution of Christians, intrareligious conflicts in the Jewish community, and the concerns of the Islamic community.

*Jordan.* In February 2000, Congressman Charles Canady forwarded a letter signed by 63 Members of Congress to King Abdullah, encouraging the Government to grant Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary's (JETS) request for registration with the Ministry of Education. In April 2000, Ambassador Seiple and members of the IRF office traveled to Jordan and met with religious leaders and officials regarding government delays in the registration of JETS. Ambassador Seiple also met with Queen Rania, who heads a new royal Human Rights Commission, and with Prince Hassan to promote interfaith dialog.

*Kazakhstan.* In May 2000, Ambassador Seiple visited Kazakhstan and met with government officials, NGO's and religious leaders. Government officials were receptive to Ambassador Seiple's offers of assistance in drafting the drafting of new religious legislation.

*Laos.* During his second visit in February 2000, Ambassador Seiple presided at a group meeting of religious leaders and officials where he emphasized the importance of religious freedom. Although the presence of government officials did not encourage frank dialog, the meeting was unprecedented and produced demarches to the Government. Ambassador Seiple met on several occasions with the Laotian Ambassador.

*Lebanon.* In April 2000, Ambassador Seiple visited Lebanon and discussed Islamic-Christian dialog with local lawyers and activists.

*Nigeria.* In July 2000, the USCIRF expressed publicly its "deep concerns" about religious violence in the country.

*Pakistan.* On an informal basis, the Embassy has assisted some Christian-affiliated relief organizations in guiding paperwork through government channels. The Embassy also assisted local and international human rights organizations in following up on specific cases involving religious minorities. In meetings with cabinet officials and National Security Council members, the Ambassador raised the issues of the blasphemy laws, separate electorates for minorities, and the seeming impunity with which sectarian groups operated. The Embassy assisted with other high-level visits—including that of four senators led by Senator Thomas Daschle, a delegation led by Senator Sam Brownback, and a congressional staff delegation—which raised religious freedom issues with senior officials.

The Embassy also conducted a number of public diplomacy programs on religious issues (e.g. "Islam in America" on Worldnet) designed to promote interfaith harmony and understanding. Expressions of concern over the blasphemy laws by the Embassy, together with the human rights community and other U.S. agencies, contributed to government efforts to implement administrative changes in application of the laws.

Ambassador Seiple and an IRF office staff member visited Pakistan during the reporting period. They met with government officials, NGO's, and religious leaders to discuss religious freedom issues.

*Poland.* One embassy officer devotes the vast majority of his time to questions of Polish/Jewish relations. The Embassy and Consulate General worked to facilitate

the protection and return of former Jewish cemeteries throughout the country and to play a continuing role in ongoing efforts to establish an international foundation to oversee restitution of Jewish communal property.

The public affairs sections of the Embassy and the Consulate in Krakow provided continuing support for activities designed to promote cultural and religious tolerance. Such activities included a digital videoconference linking young Poles with U.S. participants in the March of the Living; a 2-week voluntary visitor program for senior administrators at the Auschwitz-Birkenau state museum; and ongoing press and public affairs support for the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation and its project to renovate the last remaining synagogue in Oswiecim.

*Romania.* U.S. embassy officials have lobbied consistently with government officials for fair treatment on property restitution issues, including religious and communal properties. The Embassy has a core group of officers who focus on fostering good ethnic relations, including relations between religious groups. The Embassy lobbied against a draft religion bill and encouraged other Western embassies and religious groups in Romania to do likewise. Secretary Albright also raised the issue with the Foreign Minister. The bill eventually was withdrawn in February 2000, following which Ambassador Seiple and USCIRF Chairman Saperstein visited Bucharest in March 2000 to confirm the Government's position and discourage attempts to resurrect the law.

*Russia.* The Ambassador publicly and strongly criticized the attack on Jewish leader Leopold Kaymovskiy and the attempted bombing of the Bolshaya Bronnaya Synagogue, calling on the Government to investigate these crimes vigorously.

The Embassy in Moscow and the Consulates General in Yekaterinburg, St. Petersburg, and Vladivostok actively investigated reports of violations of religious freedom, including anti-Semitic incidents. Embassy officials at the Chief of Mission level discussed religious freedom with high-ranking officials in the presidential administration, Government, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs approximately every 6 weeks, raising specific cases of concern. Federal officials have responded by investigating those cases and keeping embassy staff informed on issues they have raised.

Embassy representatives maintained close contact with Jewish leaders throughout the aftermath of two crises. After the attempted bombing of a synagogue, the Embassy's regional security officer also visited two other Lubavitcher synagogues to advise them on physical security. The Embassy closely followed and reported on the progress of the amendment to the 1997 religion law and related Constitutional Court rulings. The Embassy played a role in resolving registration problems of two religious groups in Samara and in Tatarstan and maintains contact with Tatarstan authorities in an effort to resolve a third case. As implementation of the 1997 religion law continues, the Embassy maintains semiweekly contact with working-level officials at the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In May 2000, an embassy official attended a 4-day religion law seminar hosted by the Russian State Academy for Public Service, consulted with Russian and foreign religion law experts on the seminar results, and also met with representatives of religious groups at a subsequent briefing organized by the Esther Legal Information Center.

The 1997 law on religious freedom was the subject of numerous high-level communications between members of the U.S. executive branch and the Russian Government, involving the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and other senior U.S. officials. For example, at the U.S.-Russia Summit held in Moscow on June 10-11, 2000, President Clinton discussed religious freedom in his meetings with President Putin and other government officials. On September 14, 1999, the Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the New Independent States, Ambassador at Large Stephen Sestanovich, cochaired a roundtable meeting with representatives of religious communities at the State Department together with Senator Gordon Smith, Ambassador Seiple, and an National Security Council (NSC) Senior Director. On April 13, 2000, Ambassador Sestanovich cochaired another roundtable discussion on religious freedom in Russia with Senator Smith, Ambassador Seiple, and an NSC Senior Director.

In February 2000, Ambassador Seiple testified before the Helsinki Commission about the 1997 law. In addition he addressed the harassment of Muslims stemming from the Caucasus conflict and the case of Reverend Dan Pollard in Khabarovsk Krai. In May 2000, Ambassador Seiple testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee expressing concerns about the 1997 law and other religious freedom issues in Russia.

The USCIRF took a number of actions during the reporting period to express publicly its concern about religious freedom in Russia. These included: In December 1999, the Commission noted that the war in Chechnya was fed by religious bigotry; in May 2000, the Commission testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House International Relations Committee.



*Saudi Arabia.* An embassy officer held meetings during October, November, December, February, and March with Philippine embassy staffers during the period of detention and deportation of persons suspected of involvement with Christian proselytizing groups. On March 5 embassy officers conducted a meeting with and delivered a demarche on religious freedom to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs official in charge of human rights, including freedom of religion. In May 2000, senior embassy officers and the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, David Welch, held a meeting with the Assistant Deputy Foreign Minister regarding religious freedom and human rights issues. Also in May, a meeting was held with Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal that included Assistant Secretary Welch and an embassy officer regarding religious freedom and human rights issues. The Embassy held another meeting in May with the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs official in charge of human rights, which included discussions of freedom of religion. Ambassador Seiple also visited Saudi Arabia during the reporting period to discuss a range of religious freedom issues with government officials.

*Serbia-Montenegro.* In October 1999, the Secretary of State designated the Milosevic Government of Serbia as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

In the summer of 1999 and again in February 2000, Secretary of State Albright met with Bishop Artemije, head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, who expressed concern about the safety of the Serbs still living in Kosovo. During visits to Kosovo in July and November 1999, the Secretary delivered strong messages of ethnic tolerance in Kosovo. President Clinton also appealed for tolerance in the region on his visit in November 1999. U.S. Kosovo Force peacekeeping troops have worked to prevent ethnic and religious violence and have guarded some religious sites. The U.S. is involved actively in the U.N. Mission in Kosovo, the interim administration, which is aimed at securing peace, facilitating refugee return and reconstruction, laying the foundations for democratic selfgovernment in the province, and fostering respect for human rights regardless of ethnicity or religion. In Montenegro the U.S. Government has provided significant support and assistance to the reform-oriented republic government, which also seeks to ensure respect for human rights, including religious freedom.

In May 2000, an IRF office staff member visited Kosovo to address religious freedom issues, including protection of minority populations and places of worship.

*Sudan.* In October 1999, the Secretary of State designated Sudan as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

In May 2000, Ambassador Seiple testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and expressed concern about the significant religious dimension of government forces targeting the mostly indigenous and Christian southern population. The USCIRF took a number of actions during the reporting period to express publicly its concern about religious freedom in Sudan. These included: In January 2000, Commission member Elliot Abrams visited Sudan; in February the Commission held hearings in Washington; in May the Commission testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House International Relations Committee; and in July the Commission noted ongoing severe religious freedom violations in Sudan.

*Turkey.* In December 1999, Ambassador Seiple visited Turkey and met with Government officials, NGO's, and religious leaders to discuss religious freedom issues.

*Turkmenistan.* In May 2000 the Ambassador raised the issue of the onerous registration requirements with the Deputy Chairman of the Council on Religious Affairs. In November 1999, the Ambassador and other embassy officials went to the site of the destruction of the SeventhDay Adventist Church to condemn the decision of the Government to tear down the church. Embassy officials assisted the congregation in removing some of its religious materials from the church for storage elsewhere. In July 1999, an embassy officer attempted to attend the trial of Shageldy Atakov but was not allowed into the courtroom. In September and December 1999, embassy officers met with the head of President Niyazov's Institute for Democracy and Human Rights and members of the Council on Religious Affairs to press for reducing the onerous registration requirements for minority religions. In the course of a discussion with the Foreign Minister on U.S.-Turkmen relations in December 1999, the Charge raised the issue of religious freedom and prisoners of conscience and urged that the latter be included in an upcoming presidential amnesty. In October 1999, a USCIRF Commissioner visited Turkmenistan and in March 2000 testified before the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In May 2000, Ambassador Seiple and an IRF office staff member met with government officials and religious leaders to discuss how to make progress in the registration of religious groups.

*Ukraine.* Since most religious freedom problems in the country stem from the relationship between foreign missionaries of nonnative religions and local authorities, and most of the foreign missionaries—approximately 55 percent—working in the country today are U.S. citizens, the Embassy has intervened as necessary to defend their interests. Responding to complaints by the missionaries that Ukrainian embassies and consulates were not issuing religious worker visas, the consular section raised the importance of honoring visa reciprocity in several 1999-2000 meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These meetings did not result in tangible improvements in the Government's visa practices toward prospective religious workers; however, the Embassy plans to continue to stress the issue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy repeatedly recommended eliminating the Soviet-era requirement for an invitation to receive a Ukrainian visa. As of May 2000, invitations were no longer required for citizens of the U.S., Canada, the EU, and Japan, a change that will benefit religious workers.

The U.S. Government also has been active in advocating just restitution of religious property confiscated by the Nazi and Communist regimes. Embassy officers raised the issue in a February 2000 meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ambassador stressed the importance of a transparent and nondiscriminatory process for property restitution at the May 2000 meeting of the joint U.S.-Ukraine Cultural Heritage Commission in Kiev. A U.S. Commissioner and the Deputy Minister of Culture agreed to cooperate on drafting legislation that would prohibit construction and privatization on previous and current cemeteries of all religious denominations. The Embassy assisted in the April 2000 renewal of the Ukraine-Israel student exchange agreement which governs the actions of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAI) in the country. An embassy officer met with the Director General of the JAI, Aaron Abramovich, in August 1999. The Ambassador raised the issue in a September 1999 meeting with presidential foreign policy advisor Anatoliy Orel and Deputy Foreign Minister Oleksandr Chaliy. The Ambassador also discussed the issue with Abramovich in a January 2000 meeting. The Ambassador and his deputy raised the issue during meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Embassy officers discussed the issue several times with the Israeli Embassy: a meeting was held with the Israeli Embassy in February 2000 to discuss renewal of the Agreement. The Embassy places a high priority on monitoring anti-Semitism and maintaining close relations with local Jewish organizations. In August 1999, the Embassy hosted a meeting of Jewish community leaders with Senator Arlen Specter. Two embassy officers and a representative of the State Department's Office of Religious Freedom attended the October 1999 induction ceremony of Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny as the progressive rabbi of all Ukraine. Embassy officers also attended the March 2000 rededication of the Kiev grand synagogue. An embassy officer held regular meetings with a variety of Jewish community representatives.

In October 1999, the NSC Director for Russian, Ukrainian, and Eurasian Affairs met with representatives of religious organizations in Kiev to discuss religious freedom and property restitution. An IRF office staff member also visited Ukraine to address religious freedom issues.

*Uzbekistan.* The Ambassador delivered a speech calling for improved respect for religious freedom at the Ombudsman's February 29 roundtable on amending the religion law. The Ambassador and other embassy officers raised issues of religious freedom on at least 10 occasions in meetings with the Foreign Minister and other government officials, as well as in the context of the U.S.-Uzbek human rights working group. An embassy officer regularly discussed religious freedom with the deputy director of the Committee on Religious Affairs in the Cabinet of Ministers. There are no registered nongovernmental organizations in the country that deal specifically with issues of religious freedom. An embassy officer maintains regular contact with religious leaders and unregistered human rights activists on these and other issues.

The U.S. congressional chief of staff of the Commission for Security and cooperation in Europe, along with several staff members, held a series of meetings in Tashkent with Uzbek officials in December 1999. Issues of religious freedom were a prominent part of the agenda. In February 2000, the Assistant to the Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Newly Independent States gave a major address on religious freedom at the Tashkent University for World Economy and Diplomacy. Together with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, he discussed the religion law and issues of religious freedom with Uzbek officials, religious leaders, and human rights activists. The Deputy Assistant Secretary held additional separate meetings on these topics with both officials and activists. The Secretary of State met with President Karimov in Tashkent in April 2000, and raised U.S. concerns on these issues, particularly calling for

amendments to the religion law. During her visit, the Secretary also visited Muslim and Jewish places of worship. The Deputy Assistant Secretary returned with the Secretary's party in April 2000 to follow up on his previous meetings with a separate series of discussions with Uzbek officials. He also met with the families of victims of the repression of independent Muslims as well as with human rights activists.

Ambassador Seiple and IRF office staff met with the Uzbek ambassador in July and August 1999 to encourage improvement in the Government's respect for religious freedom. Ambassador Seiple and staff members visited the country and met with foreign ministry and other officials in May 2000 to press for progress in amending the religion law, improved treatment of imprisoned Muslims, and tolerance with regard to proselytism. He also met with religious leaders of minority faiths, including the Russian Orthodox Church, with the families of victims of the repression of independent Muslims, and with human rights activists.

*Vietnam.* The Ambassador raised religious freedom issues with senior cabinet ministers including the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, senior government and communist party advisors, the head of the Government's office on religion, deputy ministers of foreign affairs and public security, and the chairperson of provincial people's committees around the country.

Embassy officers informed government officials that progress on religious issues and human rights has an effect on the degree of full normalization of bilateral relations. The Embassy's public affairs officer distributed information about U.S. concerns about religious freedom to Communist Party and government officials. In their representations to the Government, the Ambassador and other embassy officers urged that recognition of religious groups be spread more broadly to other groups of peaceful religious believers, such as members of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam and the Protestant house churches.

In general, representations by the Embassy and Consulate have focused on specific restrictions of religious freedom. These issues include detention and arrest of religious figures and restrictions on church organizational activities, such as training religious leaders, ordination, church building, and the foreign travel of religious figures. In several cases, the Embassy's and the Consulate's interventions on issues of religious freedom have resulted in improvements. The release of several religious prisoners during amnesties in 1999 and 2000 followed long-term and direct advocacy on their behalf by the Embassy. Releases of some 20 Hmong Protestants detained in 1999 by authorities in Lai Chau province followed advocacy by the Embassy. One foreign NGO told the U.S. Embassy that officials in Lai Chau had complained that, following the visit of the Ambassador to the province in the spring of 1999, during which he had presented a list of Hmong religious prisoners, the provincial officials had been told by Hanoi authorities to ease up on their treatment of the Hmong. An embassy officer visited Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) Supreme Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang in Quang Ngai province in December 1999, his first visit from a Westerner in 18 years. Following the visit, Thich Huyen Quang was featured on national television for the first time in years, was moved from his pagoda during flooding (unlike the previous year), and received improved medical care. On several occasions, embassy and consulate officers met with prominent religious prisoners after their release from prison. Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City officers maintained an ongoing dialog with Thich Quang Do and other UBCV monks, with officially recognized Buddhists, and also maintained wide contacts within the Catholic, Protestant, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Muslim communities. In March the USCIRF publicly condemned the Government of Vietnam for its interference in a Hoa Hao commemoration. A Consulate General officer attended the first officially recognized Hoa Hao festival in Giang in July. Consulate General and embassy officials worked closely with Assemblies of God Pastor Tran Dinh "Paul" Ai to obtain a passport and then a religious worker's visa to go to the United States, following months of ongoing harassment by the police.

In July 1999, Ambassador Seiple visited Vietnam for discussions with officials and leaders of several religious bodies. He raised U.S. concerns about expanding conditions of religious freedom with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government Committee on Religion, and other government offices.

*Other Actions:* U.S. Government efforts included actions that were not specific to individual countries. Selected examples include: The Secretary of State's speech on May 4, 2000, in Washington to the American Jewish Committee; the Secretary's hosting of a December 21, 1999 "Iftaar" Dinner with American Muslim groups at the State Department; and President Clinton's frequent remarks on the status of religious freedom, especially in such countries as Vietnam, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and other countries.

The Office of International Religious Freedom hosted in May 1999 a conference in Washington on "Religion and Foreign Policy;" attended a U.S. Catholic Conference Bishops' International Policy Meeting to explain the administration's concerns about religious freedom issues; participated in a review of the USCIRF's first report by the Institute on Religion and Public Policy; and met with dozens of religious groups from many different countries who were concerned about persecution or discrimination. In October 1999 and March 2000, Ambassador Seiple and members of his staff visited the Vatican to discuss religious freedom issues. The Office continued its program of outreach to the U.S. Muslim community and has plans to expand the program to other religious communities. It also continued its support of NGO-managed reconciliation programs in Lebanon and Indonesia.

# AFRICA

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## ANGOLA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government does not require religious groups to register. Colonial era statutes banned all non-Christian religious groups from Angola; while those statutes still exist, they are no longer in effect.

#### *Religious Demography*

Christianity is the religion of the vast majority of the country's population of 10 to 12 million, with Roman Catholicism the country's largest single denomination. The Roman Catholic Church claims 5 million adherents, but such figures could not be verified. A Luanda Catholic FM radio station, Radio Ecclesia, airs weekly several hours of church services and overtly religious programming. The major Protestant denominations also are present, along with a number of indigenous African and Brazilian Christian denominations. The largest Protestant denominations include the Methodists, Baptists, United Church of Christ, and Congregationalists. The largest syncretic religious group is the Kimbanguist Church, whose followers believe that a mid-20th century Congolese pastor named Joseph Kimbangu was a prophet. A small portion of the country's rural population practices animism or traditional indigenous religions. There is a small Islamic community based around migrants from West Africa.

In colonial times, the country's coastal populations were primarily Catholic while the Protestant mission groups were active in the interior. With the massive social displacement caused by 25 years of civil war, this rough division is no longer valid.

Foreign missionaries were very active prior to independence in 1975, although the Portuguese colonial authorities expelled many Protestant missionaries and closed mission stations based on the belief that the missionaries were inciting pro-independence sentiments. The post-independence Government was a one-party state until 1991 and nationalized all church schools and clinics. Missionaries have been able to return to the country since the early 1990's although security conditions due to the civil war have made it impossible for them to return to most parts of the interior.

Members of the clergy in government-held areas regularly use their pulpits to criticize government policies. In 1996 a German clergyman was charged with subversive activities for speaking out on social issues, but there were no reported cases of such charges during the period covered by this report.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

While in general the rebel group UNITA permitted freedom of religion, interviews with persons who left UNITA-controlled areas revealed that the clergy did not enjoy the right to criticize UNITA policies.

SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the country's religious denominations, and there is a functioning ecumenical movement, particularly in support of peace.

SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

Embassy officials and official visitors from Washington routinely meet with the country's religious leaders in the context of peacekeeping, democratization, development, and humanitarian relief efforts. Church groups are key members of the country's civil society movement and are consulted regularly. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, the Director of the Agency for International Development, and others, maintain an ongoing dialog with the leaderships of all of the country's religious denominations.

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**BENIN**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Persons who wish to form a religious group must register with the Ministry of the Interior. Registration requirements are identical for all religious groups. There were no reports that any group had been refused permission to register or had been subjected to untoward delays or obstacles in the registration process. Religious groups are free from taxation. The Government accords respect to prominent religious leaders and different faiths. For example, Christian, Muslim, and traditional indigenous religious holidays are recognized officially and state-run television features coverage of the celebration of religious holidays and funerals of prominent religious leaders.

*Religious Demography*

Reliable statistics on religious affiliation are not available. However, according to most estimates, some 25 percent of the population are nominally Christian, and about 15 percent are nominally Muslim. At least 60 percent of the population adheres to one form or another of traditional indigenous beliefs. Many persons who nominally identify themselves as Christian or Muslim also practice traditional indigenous beliefs. Among the most commonly practiced traditional indigenous faith is the animist "vodoun" system of belief, which originated in this part of Africa. Almost all citizens appear to be believers in a supernatural order. There are practically no atheists.

There are Christians, Muslims, and adherents to traditional indigenous religions throughout the country. However, most adherents of the traditional Yoruba religion are in the south, while other traditional indigenous faiths are followed in the north. Muslims are represented most heavily in the north and in the southeast. Christians

are prevalent in the south, particularly in Cotonou, the economic capital. It is not unusual for members of the same family to practice Christianity, Islam, traditional indigenous religions, or several combinations of all of these.

Over half of all Christians are Roman Catholics. Other groups include Baptists, Methodists, Assembly of God, Pentecostals, Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Celestial Christians, Rosicrucians, the Unification Church, Eckankar, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Baha'i Faith. Nearly all Muslims adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam. The few Shi'a Muslims are primarily Middle Eastern expatriates.

The Reconciliation and Development Conference, held in Cotonou and sponsored by the Government in December 1999, focused on the legacy of the triangular Atlantic slave trade and sought to reconcile Africans and the African Diaspora using evangelical Protestant principles. The conference was open to persons of all faiths (or no faith) and all nationalities. Participants offered numerous religious and secular perspectives.

Missionary groups operate freely throughout the country.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Due possibly to the diversity of religious affiliations within families and communities, religious tolerance is widespread at all levels of society and in all geographic regions. Relations are generally amicable between the many religious groups. Inter-faith dialog occurs regularly, and citizens respect different religious traditions and practices, including syncretistic beliefs.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. A U.S. senator, two congressmen, and embassy representatives attended the December 1999 Reconciliation and Development Conference in Cotonou (see Section I).

## BOTSWANA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The Constitution provides for the suspension of religious freedom in the interests of national defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health. However, any suspension of religious freedom by the Government must be deemed "reasonably justifiable in a democratic society."

The Constitution also provides for the protection of the rights and freedoms of other persons, including the right to observe and practice any religion without the unsolicited intervention of members of any other religion.

All religious organizations must register with the Government. To register, a group submits its constitution to the Ministry of Home Affairs. After a generally simple bureaucratic process, the organization is registered. There are no legal benefits for registered organizations. Unregistered groups are potentially liable to penalties including fines up to \$192 (1,000 Pula), up to 7 years in jail, or both. Except

for the case of the Unification Church, there is no indication that any religious organization has ever been denied registration.

The Unification Church was denied registration (but not suspended) in 1984 by the Ministry of Home Affairs on the public order grounds stipulated in the Constitution. The Government also perceived the Unification Church as anti-Semitic and denied registration because of another constitutional provision, which protects the rights and freedoms of individuals to practice their religion without intervention. In the intervening 16 years, although it has petitioned unsuccessfully the offices of the President and Vice President, the Unification Church has made no move to challenge the Ministry's decision in the courts.

#### *Religious Demography*

About half of the country's citizens identify themselves as Christians. Anglicans, Methodists, and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa—formerly the London Missionary Society—claim the majority of Christian adherents. There are also congregations of Lutherans, Roman Catholics, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, the Dutch Reformed Church, and other Christian denominations.

In recent years, a number of churches of West African origin have begun holding services, drawing good-sized crowds with a charismatic blend of Christianity and traditional indigenous religions.

Most other citizens adhere to traditional indigenous religions, or to a mixture of religions. There is a small Muslim community—about 2 to 3 percent of the population—primarily of South Asian origin, and a very small Baha'i community as well.

The Constitution provides that every religious community may establish places for religious instruction at the community's expense. The Constitution prohibits forced religious instruction, forced participation in religious ceremonies, or taking oaths that run counter to an individual's religious beliefs.

There are no laws against proselytizing.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the country's religious communities are amicable. An independent effort to establish an inter-faith committee between the Christian and Muslim communities in the early 1990's failed due to lack of identifiable mutual interests.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## **BURKINA FASO**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There is no official state religion. Islam, Christianity, and tra-



ditional indigenous religions are practiced freely without government interference. The Government neither subsidizes nor favors any particular religion.

The Government requires that religious groups register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration. Registration establishes a group's legal presence in the country but entails no specific controls or benefits. Religious groups only are taxed if they carry on lucrative activities, i.e., farming. Registration only confers legal status. There are no penalties for failure to register. All groups are given equal access to licenses, and the Government does not approve registrations in an arbitrary manner.

#### *Religious Demography*

There is no single dominant religion. Approximately 52 percent of the population practice Islam, about 17 percent practice Roman Catholicism, about 4 percent are members of various Protestant denominations, 26 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, and approximately 1 percent practices either Buddhism or no religion. There are no reliable data on the number of atheists or persons not practicing any religion. The majority of the country's Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, while small minorities adhere to the Shi'a or Tidjania branches.

Muslims are largely concentrated around the northern, eastern, and western borders, while Christians are concentrated in the center of the country. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced widely throughout the country, especially in rural communities. Ouagadougou, the capital, is mostly Christian, and Bobo-Diaoullasso, the country's second largest city, is largely Muslim. The country has a small Muslim Lebanese immigrant community.

Members of the dominant ethnic group, the Mossi, belong to all three major religions. Fulani and Jula groups are overwhelmingly Muslim. There is little correlation between religious differences and political differences. Religious affiliation appears unrelated to membership in the ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP). Government officials belong to all of the major religions, and the practice of a particular faith is not known to entail any advantage or disadvantage in the political arena, the civil service, the military, or the private sector.

Foreign missionary groups, including Protestants, operate freely and face no special restrictions. The denominations and organizations represented include the Assemblies of God, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Christian Missionary Alliance, Baptists, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Mennonite Central Committee, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormon Church, the Pentecostal Church of Canada, the World Evangelical Crusade, and the Society for International Missions (SIM). The Government neither forbids missionaries from entering the country nor restricts their activities.

Religious instruction is not offered in public schools; it is limited to private schools and to the home. The Muslim and Catholic faiths operate general schools at the primary and secondary levels. The State monitors both the nonreligious curriculum and the qualifications of teachers employed at these schools. Although school officials must submit the names of their directors to the Government, the State has never been involved in appointing or approving these officials. The Government does not fund any religious school. Unlike other private schools, religious schools pay no taxes if they do not conduct any lucrative activities.

The Attorney General and the Superior Council of Information (CSI) have the authority to grant publishing and broadcasting licenses to religious groups. No religious group has ever been denied a license. Before granting a license, the Attorney General and the CSI must examine samples of proposed publications to assure that they are in accordance with the stated nature of the religious group and be informed of the name of the proposed publication or broadcasting director. Religious groups are free to say what they want in their publications and broadcasts unless the judicial system determines that they are harming public order or committing slander, which to date has never occurred.

There are nine radio stations operated by religious groups, of which five are run by the Catholic Church and four by Protestant denominations. Five of the stations were created before the CSI was established in 1995. All nine have signed agreements with the CSI, which means that they have complied successfully with the regulations governing the operation of all radio stations in the country, including those that are commercial and state-run.

There is one religious television station operated by a Protestant denomination in Ouagadougou. It broadcasts 2 hours in the evening in both French and the local language, More. The Catholic Church and several Protestant denominations publish periodicals.

The Government has never denied a publishing or broadcasting license to any religious group that has requested one. There are no special tax preferences granted to religious organizations operating print or broadcast media.

The procedures for applying for publishing and broadcasting licenses are the same for both religious groups and commercial entities. Applications are first sent for review to the Ministry of Communication and Culture and then forwarded to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Security (MATS). If the Government does not respond to the application for a publishing license within the required timeframe, the applicant can automatically begin publishing. For radio licenses, before beginning broadcasts the applicant must wait until the National Office of Telecommunications (ONATEL) assigns a frequency and determines that the group's broadcasting equipment is of a professional quality. Once the broadcast license is granted, the Government regulates the operation of religious radio stations in accordance with the same rules that apply to commercial and state-run stations. Stations must show that their workers are employed full-time, that ONATEL has been paid for the use of assigned frequencies, and that employee social security taxes and intellectual property fees have been paid.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities have been amicable. Religious tolerance is widespread, and members of the same family often practice different religions. There have been no significant ecumenical movements.

There have been no official reports of religious conflict or ritual murders involving practitioners of traditional religions during the period covered by this report. However, there have been allegations of witchcraft. The Ministry of Social Action and the Family maintains a shelter in Ouagadougou for women forced to flee their villages because they were suspected of being sorceresses.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses issues of religious freedom with the Government in context of its overall promotion of human rights.

The Embassy also maintains contacts with leaders of all major organized religious denominations and groups in the country.

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## BURUNDI

The Transitional Constitutional Act provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by the report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Transitional Constitutional Act provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which keeps track of their leadership and activities. The Government requires that religious groups have a headquarters in the country. Once registered, religious organizations enjoy tax-free status, and clergy theoretically do not have to pay duty on purchased goods. However, one religious group reported that it was required to pay duty on all imported goods, except books and other publications.

### *Religious Demography*

Many citizens regularly attend religious services. Although reliable statistics on the number of followers of various religions are not available, a Roman Catholic official estimated that 60 percent of the population are Catholic, with the largest concentration of adherents located in the center and south of the country. A Muslim leader estimated that up to 10 percent of the population are Muslim, mostly in urban areas. The remainder of the population belongs to other Christian churches, practices traditional indigenous religions, or has no religious affiliation.

The heads of major religious organizations are accorded diplomatic status. Foreign missionary groups of many faiths are active in the country and openly promote their religious beliefs. The Government has welcomed their development assistance.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In their practice of religion, citizens generally tolerate other religions. Disputes between religious groups are rare, apart from minor disagreements over competition for followers.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officials also maintain regular contact with leaders and members of the various religious communities.

# CAMEROON

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations among different religious groups are generally amicable; however, some religious groups face societal pressure and discrimination within their regions, although this may reflect ethnic as much as religious differences.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

In general, the Law on Religious Congregations governs relations between the State and religious groups. Religious groups must be approved and registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration in order to function legally; there were no reports that the Government refused to register any group. It is illegal for a religious group to operate without official recognition, but the law prescribes no specific penalties for doing so. Although official recognition confers no general tax benefits, it does allow religious groups to receive real estate as gifts and legacies for the conduct of their activities. In order to register, a religious denomination must fulfill the legal requirement to qualify as a religious congregation. This definition includes "any group of natural persons or corporate bodies whose vocation is divine worship" or "any group of persons living in community in accordance with a religious doctrine." The denomination then submits a file to the Minister of Territorial Administration. The file must include a request for authorization, a copy of the charter of the group which describes planned activities, and the names and respective functions of the officials of the group. The Minister studies the file and sends it to the presidency with a recommendation for a positive or negative decision. The President generally follows the recommendation of the Minister, and authorization is granted by a presidential decree. The approval process usually takes several years, due pri-

marily to administrative delays. The only religious groups known to be registered are Christian and Muslim groups and the Baha'i Faith, but other groups may be registered. The Ministry has not disclosed the number of registered denominations, but the number of registered religious groups is estimated to be in the dozens. The Government does not register traditional religious groups on the grounds that the practice of traditional religions is not public but rather private to members of a particular ethnic or kinship group, or to the residents of a particular locality.

#### *Religious Demography*

Muslim centers and Christian churches of various denominations operate freely throughout the country. Approximately 40 percent of the population are at least nominally Christian, about 20 percent are at least nominally Islamic, and about 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Of the Christians, approximately half are Catholics and about half are affiliated with Protestant denominations. Christians are concentrated mainly in the southern and western provinces. The two Anglophone provinces of the western region are largely Protestant; the Francophone provinces of the southern and western regions are largely Catholic. Muslims are concentrated mainly in the northern provinces, where the locally dominant Fulani (or Peuhl) ethnic group is overwhelmingly Muslim, and other ethnic groups, known collectively as the Kirdi, are generally partly Islamicized. The Bamoun ethnic group of the western provinces is also largely Muslim. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced in rural areas throughout the country but rarely are practiced publicly in cities, in part because many such religions are intrinsically local in character.

Religious missionaries are present throughout the country and operate without impediment, including 100 American missionaries and their dependents. Several religious denominations also operate diverse private schools. A Catholic-affiliated private radio station also continues to broadcast in Yaounde while its official authorization remains pending. The Catholic Church, the largest religious denomination in the country, also operates a private institution of general postsecondary education, one of the country's very few modern private printing presses, and a weekly newspaper, which until the 1990's was one of the only private newspapers in the country.

The Government does not have a program to promote inter-faith understanding. Although post-secondary education continues to be dominated by state institutions, private schools affiliated with religious denominations, including Catholic, Protestant, and Koranic schools, long have been among the country's best schools at the primary and secondary levels. The Ministry of Education is charged by law with ensuring that private schools run by religious groups meet the same standards as state-operated schools in terms of curriculum, building quality, and teacher training. For schools affiliated with religious groups, this oversight function is performed by the Sub-Department of Confessional Education of the Ministry's Department of Private Education.

Disputes within registered religious groups about control of places of worship, schools, real estate, or financial assets are resolved in the first instance by the executive branch rather than by the judiciary.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

On April 24, the Ministry of National Education announced the suspension of two teachers of the Bertoua technical high school. The two teachers were accused of having "enticed" some of their students into their religious group. On April 20, 2000, government security forces reportedly stormed Notre Dame de Sept Douleurs parish in Douala during the ceremony of Mass. Security forces reportedly arrested some parishioners and beat others.

The sites and personnel of religious institutions were not exempt from the widespread human rights abuses committed by government security forces. In January 1998, an undisclosed number of personnel of the 21st Navy Battalion, allegedly broke into a church in Douala, beat and stabbed the priest and several youths, raped young women, and stole funds. On February 22, 2000, the Douala Military Tribunal convicted the personnel of breach of orders causing bodily harm and destruction. The tribunal sentenced them to 1-year imprisonment with no possibility of remission.

In the past, government officials have criticized and questioned any criticisms of the Government by religious institutions and leaders; however, there were no reports that government officials during the period covered by this report used force or other means to suppress such criticism.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among different religious groups are generally amicable; however, some religious groups face societal pressures within their regions. In the northern provinces, especially in rural areas, societal discrimination by Muslims against persons who practice traditional indigenous religions is strong and widespread, and some Christians in rural areas of the north complain of discrimination by Muslims. However, no specific incidents or violence stemming from religious discrimination were reported, and the reported discrimination may reflect ethnic as much as religious differences. The northern region suffers from ethnic tensions between the Fulani, a Muslim group that conquered most of the region 200 years ago, and the Kirdi, the descendants of groups that practiced traditional indigenous religions and whom the Fulani conquered or displaced, justifying their conquest on religious grounds. Although some Kirdi subsequently have adopted Islam, the Kirdi remain socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged relative to the Fulani in the three northern provinces. (The slavery still practiced in parts of the north is reported to be largely enslavement of Kirdi by Fulani.)

There were no reports of religiously motivated violence by practitioners of a traditional indigenous religion against persons who did not practice that religion.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy maintained regular contact with religious groups in the country and monitored religious freedom.

# CAPE VERDE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution also provides for the separation of church and state and prohibits the State from imposing any religious beliefs and practices.

To be recognized officially by the Government, religious groups (as well as other organized groups of citizens) must register with the Ministry of Justice to be recognized as legal entities. However, failure to do so does not result in any restriction on religious belief or practice.

### *Religious Demography*

The overwhelming majority (over 90 percent) of citizens is at least nominally Roman Catholic. The largest Protestant denomination is the Church of the Nazarene. Other Christian churches include the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Assembly of God, and various other Pentecostal and evangelical groups. There are also small Muslim and Baha'i communities.

It generally is recognized that the Catholic majority enjoys a privileged status in national life—for example, the Government provides it with free television broadcast time for religious services and observes its holy days as official holidays.

There is no association between religious differences and ethnic or political differences, although it generally is recognized that the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the country is sympathetic to the governing Movement for Democracy (MPD) party and generally hostile to the opposition Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV).

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion but establishes fixed legal conditions and prohibits what the Government considers religious fundamentalism or intolerance. Although the constitutional provision prohibiting religious fundamentalism is widely understood to be aimed at Muslims, in practice, the Government permits adherents of all religions to worship without interference.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Generally there are amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, there have been occasional reports that persons believed to be witches were harassed, beaten, or sometimes killed.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion but establishes fixed legal conditions and prohibits what the Government considers religious fundamentalism or intolerance. The constitutional provision prohibiting religious fundamentalism is widely understood to be aimed at Muslims. In practice, the Government permits adherents of all religions to worship without interference.

Religious groups (except for traditional indigenous religious groups) are required by law to register with the Ministry of Interior. This registration is free and confers official recognition and certain limited benefits, such as customs duty exemption for the importation of vehicles or equipment, but does not confer a general tax exemption. The administrative police of the Ministry of Interior keep track of groups that have failed to register but the police have not attempted to impose any penalty on such groups. During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to refuse to reregister the previously registered and subsequently banned Unification Church. The Government does not register traditional indigenous religious groups.

#### *Religious Demography*

A variety of religious communities are active. The population is believed to be about 50 percent Christian, 15 percent Muslim, and 35 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, or non-religious. Most Christians also practice some aspects of their traditional indigenous religions.

Religious organizations and missionary groups are free to proselytize, worship, and construct places of worship.

The Government has taken positive steps to promote inter-faith dialog.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Any religious or nonreligious group that the Government considers subversive is subject to sanctions. The Ministry of Interior may decline to register, suspend the operations of, or ban any organization that it deems offensive to public morals or likely to disturb the peace. The Government has banned the Unification Church since the mid-1980's as a subversive organization likely to disturb the peace, specifically in connection with alleged paramilitary training of young church members. However, the Government imposed no new sanctions on any religious group during the period covered by this report. The Ministry of Interior also may intervene to resolve internal conflicts about property, finances, or leadership within religious groups.

Muslims, particularly Mbororo (also known as Peulh or Fulani) herders, claim to be singled out for harassment by authorities, including extortion by police, due to popular resentment of their presumed affluence. Muslims play a preponderant role in the economy.

The practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense under the Penal Code; however, persons are generally prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown. Although many traditional indigenous religions include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it. The practice of witchcraft is widely understood to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic, but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although religious tolerance among members of different religious groups is the norm, there have been occasional reports that some villagers who were believed to be witches were harassed, beaten or sometimes killed by neighbors. Courts have tried, convicted, and sentenced some persons for crimes of violence against suspected witches.

During the period covered by this report, traveling in the northern central region of the country became unsafe. Religious groups, particularly Catholic priests and nuns, were victims of organized armed highway bandits on the road to Bambari, near Grimari village, 180 miles northeast of Bangui. On February 5, 2000, armed bandits attacked a vehicle transporting priests, and an hour later attacked another one in which they killed one nun and wounded another. A week later the funeral procession of the nun was attacked near the same place.

Archbishop Joachim Ndayen protested this assault against Catholic clergy by accusing the Government of silence, and of not stopping highway banditry or prosecuting the perpetrators.

When serious social or political conflicts have arisen, simultaneous prayer ceremonies have been held in churches, temples, and mosques to ask for divine assistance. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace often conducts developmental and educational programs and seminars throughout the country. The members work closely with other church groups and social organizations on social issues. On April 15, 2000, this commission organized a large rally at the national stadium to promote dialog on peace and tolerance. President Ange Felix Patasse and many government officials attended. National radio and television covered the event.

There was some popular resentment of the presumed affluence of Muslims (see Section I).

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy maintains contact with religious groups, especially American missionaries in the country, and monitors human rights developments.

## CHAD

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, at times it has limited this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Generally there are amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, there are indications of increasing tension between Christians and Muslims due to the proselytizing by evangelical Christians.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Constitution also provides that the country shall be a secular state. However, despite the secular nature of the State, a large proportion of senior government officials are Muslims, and some policies favor Islam in practice. For example, the Government sponsors annual Hajj trips to Mecca for certain government officials.

The Government requires religious groups, including both foreign missionary groups and domestic religious groups, to register with the Ministry of the Interior's Department for Religious Affairs. Registration confers official recognition but does not confer any tax preferences or other benefits. There are no specific legal penalties for failure to register, and there were no reports that any group had failed to apply for registration or that the registration process is unduly burdensome. The Government reportedly has denied official recognition to some groups of Arab Muslims in Ati, near the eastern border with Sudan, on the grounds that they have incorporated elements of traditional African religion, such as dancing and singing, into their worship. For example, the Minister of Interior banned the Islamic group Faydal Djaria in January 1998.

Non-Islamic religious leaders claim that Islamic officials and organizations receive greater tax exemptions and unofficial financial support from the Government. State lands reportedly are accorded to Islamic leaders for the purpose of building mosques, while other religious denominations must purchase land at market rates to build churches.

On May 31, 2000, the Supreme Court handed down a decision rejecting a request from one branch of a Christian evangelical church to deny government recognition to its independent sister branch. In 1998 the Eglise Evangelique des Freres (EEF) split into moderate and fundamentalist groups. The moderate branch of the EEF retained the legal registration for the Church, but on April 7, 1999, the Ministry of Interior awarded recognition to the fundamentalist branch under a new name (Eglise des Freres Independentes au Tchad (EFIT)). Since 1999 the EEF branch has sought to bar the EFIT church legally from practice, and ultimately the case went before the Supreme Court, which upheld the rights of the EFIT to continue its religious work and its right to function.

#### *Religious Demography*

Of the total population, 54 percent are Islamic. About one-third are Christian, and the remainder practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion at all. Most northerners practice Islam; most southerners practice Christianity or a traditional indigenous religion. Many citizens, despite stated religious affiliation, do not regularly practice their religion.

The vast majority of Muslims practice a moderate form of Islam known locally as Tidjani, which originated in 1727 under Sheik Ahmat Tidjani in what is now Morocco and Algeria. Tidjani Islam, as practiced in the country, incorporates some local African religious elements. A small minority of the country's Muslims (5 to 10 percent) is considered fundamentalist.

Roman Catholics make up the largest Christian denomination in the country; most Protestants are affiliated with various evangelical Christian groups.

Adherents of two other religions, the Baha'i Faith and Jehovah's Witnesses, also are present in the country. Both faiths were introduced after independence in 1960 and therefore are considered to be "new" religions. Because of their relatively recent origin and their affiliation with foreign practitioners, both are perceived as foreign.

There are foreign missionaries representing both Christian and Islamic groups. Catholic and Protestant (primarily evangelical Christian) missionaries proselytize in the country. Itinerant Muslim imams also visit, primarily from Sudan, Saudi Ara-



bia, and Pakistan. Foreign missionaries do not face restrictions but must register and receive authorization from the Ministry of Interior.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Within the Islamic community, the Government has intervened to imprison and sanction fundamentalist Islamic imams believed to be promoting conflict among Muslims. A fundamentalist imam in N'Djamena, Sheikh Faki Suzuki (named after the Suzuki car equipped with loudspeakers that he uses for broadcasting his sermons around town) was restricted from preaching Islam for 6 months, from October 1998 to March 1999, and the authorities also placed him under house arrest. He is no longer under house arrest. However, since the beginning of 2000, he has experienced problems with the Islamic Committee in Ndjamen for painting their name and logo on his car. He was warned twice not to try to represent the committee, and he responded by removing the committee name from his car.

In January 1999, the Government arbitrarily arrested and detained imam Sheikh Mahamat Marouf, the fundamentalist Islamic leader of the northeastern town of Abeche, and refused to allow his followers to meet and pray openly in their mosque. Sheikh Marouf was released from prison in November 1999 after nearly 1 year in jail. Sheikh Marouf may pray but is not permitted to lead prayers. His followers are allowed to pray in their mosques, but are forbidden from debating religious beliefs in any way that might be considered proselytizing—although the Tidjani followers are allowed to proselytize.

In both instances, the Government claims that the men were responsible for inciting religious violence; their followers reject the Government's claim and cite religious differences with the Government.

On May 25, 2000, the Sultan of Kanem arrested a large number of adherents of an Islamic group, Faydal Djaria. The group arrived in the country from Nigeria and Senegal, and incorporates singing and dancing into its religious ceremonies and activities. Male and female members of the group freely interact with one another during religious gatherings. The group is found from the Kanem region around Lake Chad into neighboring Chari Baguirmi. The Chadian Superior Council of Islamic Affairs considers that the Faydal Djaria group does not conform to Islamic tenets, and requested the Ministry of Interior to arrest the group's spiritual leader, Ahmat Abdallah. In January 1998, the Minister of Interior banned the group. However, since the beginning of 2000, the group has been increasingly active, resulting in the recent arrests in the Kanem. The new Director of Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Interior has requested that the Superior Council of Islamic Affairs to provide the specific sections of the Koran that support the ban of the group.

There is an undetermined number of Faydal Djaria followers who are prisoners in Kanem.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Most inter-faith dialog happens on an individual level and not through the intervention of the Government. Although the different religious communities generally coexist without problems, some citizens have noted increasing tension between Christians and Muslims due to the proselytizing by evangelical Christians. In addition, tensions and conflicts between government supporters from the politically dominant northern region and rebels from the politically subordinate southern region occasionally have religious overtones.

However, representatives of civil society and religious leaders met under the Ministry of Social Affairs' auspices to develop a new Family Code during the period covered by this report. Although the working group was not able to resolve certain differences between religious groups, the Government still seeks to formulate a Family Code that takes all religious and ethnic groups' social practices into consideration. At issue were traditional Islamic attitudes regarding inheritance, marriage, and other social customs that Islamic leaders consider as fundamental to their religion and not open to compromise.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## COMOROS

The new Constitution decreed in May 1999 does not prohibit specifically discrimination based on religion or religious belief, and the Government restricted this right.

There was no change in the status of what is at times limited respect for religious freedom during the period of the report.

An overwhelming majority of the population is Sunni Muslim. Government authorities and the local population restricted the right of Christians to practice their faith. Police regularly threatened and sometimes detained practicing Christians. Usually the authorities hold those detained for a few days and often attempt to convert them to Islam forcibly. In October 1999, two citizens were arrested, tried, and convicted of "anti-Islamic activity" in part because they possessed Christian books and audiovisual material. One of the citizens was sentenced to 18 months in prison, while the other was sentenced to 4 months. The first was released after 4 months, while the second was released after 2 months. There is widespread societal discrimination against Christians.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution promulgated in May by the head of the military after the April 20, 1999, coup provides that the National Army of Development upholds individual and collective liberties; however, it does not provide specifically for freedom of religion, and the Government restricted this right. The Government discouraged the practice of religions other than Islam. Christians, in particular, faced restrictions on their ability to practice their faith. The Ulamas council, which had advised the President, Prime Minister, President of the Federal Assembly, the Council of Isles, and the island governors on whether bills, ordinances, decrees, and laws are in conformity with the principles of Islam, no longer exists. The Constitution written by the separatist leadership of the island of Anjouan provides for freedom of religion; however, the separatist leadership has discouraged the practice of religions other than Islam. However, there were no reports of official persecution initiated by civil authorities during the period covered by this report. In one instance on Anjouan, a judge intervened to protect Christians from harassment.

*Religious Demography*

An overwhelming majority—almost 99 percent—of the population is Sunni Muslim. Fewer than 300 persons—less than 1 percent of the population—are Christian; all of who reportedly converted to Christianity within the last 5 years. There is a very small population (less than five families) of Indian descent, of which two or three families are Hindu.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government continues to restrict the use of the country's three churches to noncitizens. There are two Roman Catholic churches, one in Moroni on the island of Grande Comore and one in Mutsamudu on the island of Anjouan. There is one Protestant church in Moroni. Many Christians practice their faith in private residences. Christian missionaries work in local hospitals and schools, but they are not allowed to proselytize.

Some community authorities on Anjouan have banned Christians from attending any community events and banned Christian burials in a local cemetery, but there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report.

Bans on alcohol and immodest dress are enforced sporadically, usually during religious months, like Ramadan. Alcohol can be imported and sold with a permit from the Government.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Police regularly threatened and sometimes detained practicing Christians. In December 1999, Bibles were found in the possession of three young men from the vil-

lage of Chomoni on Grande Comore. A mob burned two of their huts, and they were turned over to local police. The police reportedly beat them, doused them with water, and then imprisoned them for 3 days before they were released. In the past, there have been accounts of police and quasi-police authorities, known as *embargoes*, arresting, beating, and detaining Christians on the island of Anjouan; however, there were no such incidents reported during the period covered by this report.

The Government has arrested and convicted individuals with Christian affiliations on charges of "anti-Islamic activity." In October 1999, two citizens were arrested, tried, and convicted on charges of disturbing the peace and anti-Islamic activity. They were apprehended following a protest by Islamic religious leaders against the airing of a Christian video on a local, private television station. One was sentenced to 18 months for allegedly selling or giving away the videotapes; he was released after serving 4 months in jail. The other was sentenced to 4 months for having a meeting in his home where the same videos were shown; he was released after serving 2 months in jail and since has left the country. Police confiscated videos, Bibles, and books from the homes of the individuals and arrested one of them while he was trying to flee the country. The police declared the videos illegal and ordered that all copies be turned in to authorities; in making this declaration, the police announced in that "freedom of worship is not recognized in Comoros;" however, it is not clear whether this announcement was a statement made by an individual policeman or a statement of official policy.

There is Islamic instruction in public schools for students at the middle school level that coincides with Arabic instruction. Almost all children between 4 and 7 years of age go to koranic schools outside of normal school hours in order to learn to read the Koran.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is widespread societal discrimination against Christians in all sectors of life. Attempts have been made to isolate Christians from village life. In September and October 1999, on Anjouan, a religious leader started an unofficial campaign against Christians. Committees were formed in many villages to harass Christians, and lists of names of suspected Christians were circulated. Anti-Christian rhetoric was broadcast on the radio. This campaign resulted in threats, but there were no reports of violence. Christians face insults and threats of violence from members of their communities. Christians have been harassed by mobs in front of mosques and called in for questioning by religious authorities. In some instances, families have forced Christian family members out of their homes or threatened them with a loss of financial support. Some Christians have had their Bibles taken by family members. In the past, local government officials, religious authorities, and family members have attempted to force Christians to attend services at mosques against their will, but there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report.

Islamic fundamentalism is growing in popularity as more students return to the country after studying Islamic subjects in foreign countries.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Although there is no constitution currently in effect, the Government generally respected freedom of religion in practice, provided that worshipers neither disturb public order nor contradict commonly held morals; however, government forces committed some abuses.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in government-controlled areas. However, in areas of the country under the military occupation of Rwanda, Uganda, and their respective rebel clients, respect for religious freedom deteriorated. Credible reports indicate that occupying troops and their rebel allies deliberately targeted Catholic churches as a means of both intimidating the local pop-

ulation and in revenge for the Church's perceived role in the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda. Credible sources report that these attacks resulted in priests being killed, nuns raped, and churches burned. Rebel and Rwandan authorities also exiled the Bishop of Bukavu, whom they suspected of inciting resistance. However, these actions apparently resulted largely from political, rather than religious, motives.

Relations between the major religions were amicable, with the National Consultations serving as a catalyst in promoting greater cooperation.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government protested the forced internal exile of the Bishop of Bukavu, and repeatedly called for an end to the war and the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Policy/Legal Framework*

Although there is no constitution currently in effect, the Government generally respects freedom of religion in practice, provided that worshipers neither disturb public order nor contradict commonly held morals; however, government forces committed some abuses. There is no state religion.

The establishment and operation of religious institutions is provided for and regulated through a statutory order on Regulation of Non-profit Associations and Public Utility Institutions. Requirements for the establishment of a religious organization are simple and generally not subject to abuse. Exemption from taxation is among the benefits granted to religious organizations. A 1971 law regulating religious organizations grants civil servants the power to recognize, suspend recognition of, or dissolve religious groups. There have been no reports of the Government suspending or dissolving a religious group since 1990, when the Government suspended its recognition of the Jehovah's Witnesses; that suspension subsequently was reversed by a court. Although this law restricts the process of recognition, officially recognized religions are free to establish places of worship and to train clergy. In practice, religious groups that are not recognized also worship freely.

The Government promoted inter-faith understanding by supporting the country's five major churches (Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Orthodox, and Kimbanguist) in establishing the National Consultations, an open forum to explore ways to end the war.

### *Religious Demography*

Approximately 50 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, 20 percent are Protestant, and 10 percent are Muslim. The remainder largely practice traditional indigenous religions. There are no statistics available on the percentage of atheists. Minority religious groups include, among others, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon).

There are no reliable data on active participation in religious services. Ethnic and political differences generally are not linked to religious differences.

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

On January 29, 1999, President Kabila promulgated a decree that restricts the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), including religious organizations, by establishing requirements for them; however, existing religious organizations were exempt, and the decree subsequently was not enforced.

Although the Government required foreign religious groups to obtain the approval of the President, through the Minister of Justice, foreign religious groups generally operate without restriction once they receive approval from the Government. Many recognized churches have external ties, and foreign missionaries are allowed to proselytize. The Government generally did not interfere with foreign missionaries. However, foreign missionaries have not been exempt from general human rights abuses by security forces, such as restrictions on freedom of movement imposed on all persons by security force members who erect and man roadblocks where they solicit bribes.

In areas under government control, there has been no known persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses or any other groups for practicing their faith in recent years. The Government does not prohibit or punish assembly for peaceful religious services, regardless of faith. The Government does not influence religious teachings to children and places no restriction on the distribution of religious literature.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in government-controlled areas during the period covered by this report.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

While the Government is tolerant in matters of religion, some abuses occurred in government-controlled areas as a result of the war. These abuses, usually the ransacking of churches and the pilfering of church property, generally were the result of a lack of discipline among government troops.

A government order in July 1999 prohibiting private radio stations from transmitting foreign radio broadcasts effectively targeted a Catholic radio station that was compelled to cease broadcasting programs of foreign origin. The target was not religious broadcasts; rather it was foreign programs critical of the Government.

On September 14, 1999, security forces arrested Catherine Nzuzi, president of the major faction of the Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution (MPR) party, after she organized a Mass in memory of former President Mobutu on the second anniversary of his death. She was detained for 5 hours on charges of violating a decree on political activity.

In September 1999, government security forces arrested Reverend Fernando Kuthino after his actions sparked street demonstrations by Muslims. The Reverend had converted a Muslim on television, then publicly burned notes that the convert had taken while studying the Koran. Muslims claimed that the burned verses were from the Koran. The Reverend never was tried, and he was released in March 2000.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who were abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Due to advances made in the east by military units of Rwanda and Uganda in support of various rebel factions, the Government lost control of more than half the country. It exercises little authority in areas east of the current battlefield. Numerous human rights groups reported significant abuses in these areas by the occupying troops of Rwanda and Uganda, as well as various rebel factions, which targeted Catholic clergy. These reports were confirmed by a number of independent sources, including the Catholic Church. Abuses reportedly took the form of attacks on missions, killings of priests, the rape of nuns, and the burning of churches. Human rights groups claimed that occupying troops and rebels targeted the Catholic Church as a result of its perceived collusion in the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda. According to one human rights publication, Tutsis "show great hostility" towards the Catholic Church. In the province of South Kivu, rebels of the RCD-Goma faction acting with Rwandan support refused to allow the Bishop of Bukavu to return to his diocese following a trip outside the province. Rebels and their Rwandan supporters forced the Bishop into internal exile as a result of his alleged hostility towards the military occupation of the province.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the major religions were amicable, with the National Consultations serving as a catalyst in promoting greater cooperation.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

The U.S. Government criticized the forced internal exile of the Bishop of Bukavu, in both private discussions and public statements. On numerous occasions, the U.S. Government also has voiced its opposition to the presence of hostile foreign troops in the country. The U.S. Government also publicly criticized the war, and launched a number of diplomatic initiatives, in concert with the United Nations, to bring the conflict to an end.

## REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Constitution (Fundamental Act) provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

While government policy and the generally amicable relations among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion, the close link between certain messianic groups and opposition political movements at times has been a source of tension.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution (Fundamental Act) provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There is no official state religion.

##### *Religious Demography*

Approximately half of the country's 2.6 million citizens are Christian; of these about 90 percent are Roman Catholic.

There is a small Muslim community estimated at 25,000 to 50,000 persons, most of who are immigrants from North and West Africa who work in commerce in urban centers.

The remainder of the population is made up of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, those who belong to various messianic groups, and those who practice no religion at all. A small minority of the Christian community practices Kimbanguism, a syncretist movement that originated in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo. While retaining many elements of Christianity, Kimbanguism also recognizes its founder (Simon Kimbangu) as a prophet and incorporates African traditional beliefs, such as ancestor worship.

Mystical or messianic practices (especially among the ethnic Lari population in the Pool region) have been associated with opposition political movements, including some elements of the armed insurrection in the south during 1998-1999.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

##### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities. All organized religious groups are represented in a joint ecumenical council, which meets regularly.

#### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses issues of religious freedom with a broad cross-section of society (including church leaders, government officials, and members of civil society) in the context of its overall promotion of human rights.

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## COTE D'IVOIRE

The Constitution was suspended following the December 24, 1999 coup d'état. The Constitution provided for freedom of religion, as does the proposed new constitution, which is to be voted on in a July referendum; the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally tolerant relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion; however, followers of traditional indigenous religions are subject to societal discrimination. The Government monitors minority religions for signs of political activity it considers subversive or dangerous.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution that was suspended following the December 24, 1999 coup d'état provided for freedom of religion, and the Government generally protected this right.

The post-coup military government continued to respect this right and is proposing a constitution that provides for protection of religious freedom, which is to be voted on in a referendum scheduled for July 23. There is no state religion, but for historical and ethnic reasons the Government informally favored Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic Church leaders had a much stronger voice in government affairs than their Islamic counterparts, which led to feelings of disenfranchisement among the Muslim population. After assuming power following the coup, General Robert Guei indicated that one of the goals of the transition government was to end this favoritism and put all of the major religious faiths on an equal footing. In practice, the Government has not taken any steps to bring this about.

In 1987-90, then-President Felix Hophuet-Boigny sponsored the construction in his hometown, Yamoussoukro, of the world's largest Catholic church, the "Our Lady of Peace" Basilica, which was modeled on St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and consecrated by the Pope. Although the basilica's construction was financed ostensibly by private funds, allegations persist that funds of the National Cocoa and Coffee Board, a state-owned export monopoly, were diverted for this purpose. The Government also paid for the construction of the Catholic cathedral in Abidjan, which was completed in 1985; part of the cost of building it also was paid by contributions that the Government required of all salaried workers in the country, regardless of their religious affiliation. The Government sponsors or finances the construction of shrines for groups other than the Catholic Church. It currently is directing the construction of the Plateau Mosque in central Abidjan and financing it with the help of governments or government-affiliated religious organizations of some largely Islamic Arab countries. A high government official has indicated that the Government plans soon to sponsor the construction of a temple for all of the country's Protestant denominations when resources permit.

The Government establishes requirements for religious groups under a 1939 French law. All religious groups wishing to operate in the country must submit to the Ministry of the Interior a file including the group's by-laws, the names of the founding members, the date of founding (or date on which the founder received the revelation of his or her calling), the minutes of the general assembly, the names of members of the administrative board, and other information. The Interior Ministry investigates the backgrounds of the founding members to ascertain that the group has no politically subversive purpose. However, in practice, the Government's regulation of religious groups generally has not been unduly restrictive since 1990, when the Government legalized opposition political parties.

Although nontraditional religious groups, like all public secular associations, are required to register with the Government, no penalties are imposed on a group that fails to register. In practice, registration can bring advantages of public recognition, invitation to official ceremonies and events, publicity, gifts, and school subsidies. No religious group has ever complained of arbitrary registration procedures or recognition. The Government does not register traditional indigenous religious groups.

The Government grants no tax or other benefits to religious groups. However, some religious groups have gained some favors after individual negotiations. Examples include reductions in the cost of resident alien registration, customs exemptions on certain religious items, and, in some cases, privileges similar to those of diplomats. No particular religion is favored consistently in this manner. Occasionally, a state-owned company grants favors to religious leaders, such as a reduction in airplane fare.

#### *Religious Demography*

The published results of the most recent national census, conducted in 1998, indicate that Muslims make up about 38.6 percent of the country's population; Catholics make up 19.4 percent; Protestants, 6.6 percent; Harrists, 1.3 percent; other Christians, 3.1 percent; practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, 11.9 percent; practitioners of other religions, 1.7 percent; and persons without religious preference or affiliation, 16.7 percent. Among citizens, 27.4 percent are Muslim, 20.8 percent are Catholic, 8.2 percent are Protestant, 1.6 percent are Harrist, 3.4 percent are of other Christian affiliations, 15.4 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, 1.9 percent practice other religions, and 20.7 percent are without religious affiliation. Foreigners living in the country are 70.5 percent Muslim and 15.4 percent Catholic with small percentages practicing other religions.

Muslims are found in greatest numbers in the northern half of the country, although due to immigration they also are becoming increasingly numerous in the cities of the south. In 1998 Muslims composed 45.5 percent of the total urban population and 33.5 percent of the total rural population. Catholics are found mostly in the southern, central, and eastern portions of the country. Practitioners of traditional indigenous religions are concentrated in rural areas of the north, west, center,

and east. Protestants are concentrated in the central, eastern, and southwest regions. Members of the Harrist Church, an African Protestant denomination founded in the country in 1913 by a Liberian preacher named William Wade Harris, are concentrated in the south.

Both political and religious affiliation tends to follow ethnic lines. As population growth and movement have accentuated ethnic distinctions between the groups of the Sahel and those of the forest zone, those distinctions have been sometimes expressed in terms of religion (e.g., northern Muslims vs. southern Christians and traditionalists).

Religious groups in the country include the Adventist Church, the Assemblies of God, the Southern Baptist Church, Bossonism (the traditional religious practices of the Akan ethnic group), the Autonomous Church of Celestial Christianity of Oschoffa, Islam, Roman Catholicism, the Union of the Evangelical Church of Services and Works of Cote d'Ivoire, the Harrist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Protestant Methodist Church of Cote d'Ivoire, the Yoruba First Church, the Church of God International Missions, the Baptist Church Missions, the Church of the Prophet Papa Nouveau (a syncretistic religion founded in the country in 1937, which combines Christian doctrine, traditional African rituals, and practical concern for social, political, and economic progress for Africans), the Pentecostal Church of Cote d'Ivoire, the Messianic Church, the Limoudim of Rabbi Jesus (a small Christian group, the origins of which are not known), the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Interdenominational Church. Many religious groups in the country are associated with American religious groups.

Most of the country's many syncretistic religions are forms of Christianity that contain some traditional African practices and rituals. Many of these have been founded by Ivoirian or other African prophets and are organized around and dependent upon the founder's personality. Some emphasize faith healing or sale of sacred objects imbued with supernatural powers to bring health and good luck. Many nominal Christians and Muslims practice some aspects of traditional indigenous religions, especially in difficult times.

Traditional indigenous religions, which are not registered officially as religions, rarely are included in official or unofficial lists of the country's religions. There is no generally accepted system of classifying the country's diverse traditional religious practices, which vary not only by ethnic group, but also by region, village, and family, as well as by gender and age group. In addition, members of the country's largely Christianized or Islamicized urban elites, which effectively control the State, generally seem disinclined to accord to traditional indigenous religions the social status accorded to Christianity and Islam. No traditional indigenous religious leader (except for traditional rulers, who also may perform some traditional religious functions) is known ever to have been invited to present New Year's greetings to the President or to take part in a government advisory council.

Generally there has been a trend towards conversion by practitioners of traditional religions to Christianity and Islam. Missionary work, urbanization, immigration, and greater education levels have led to a decline in the percentage of practitioners of traditional religion from 37 percent in 1975 to 11.9 percent in 1998.

Immigrants from other parts of Africa are generally at least nominally Muslim or Christian. The majority of foreign missionaries are European or American representatives of established religions, but some Nigerians and Congolese have set up churches. Foreign missionaries must meet the same requirements as any foreigner, including resident alien registration and identification card requirements.

Until recently, Catholic priests tended to be better educated than leaders of other religions. Numerous Catholic schools were founded in the country in the early 1900's, during French colonial rule, and citizens who attended these schools generally received good educations and came to make up a disproportionately large part of the country's elites. Many senior government officials, including all three heads of state since independence, have been Catholics.

The Baoule ethnic minority, which has dominated the State and the ruling Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) from independence in 1960 until 1999, is largely Catholic, although some Baoules continue to practice traditional indigenous religion and a few practice Islam.

The Government has taken steps to improve the situation of Muslims. However, Muslims often have had to struggle for state benefits that came more easily to practitioners of other religions. For example, Catholic and Protestant schools are regarded as official schools supervised by the Ministry of Education and subsidized by the Government. However, until 1994 Islamic schools were regarded as religious schools, were supervised by the Ministry of the Interior, and were unsubsidized even if they followed official school curriculums. Since 1994 Islamic schools that follow official curriculums have been subsidized by the Government. The Government rec-



ognized no Muslim religious holidays until 1974 and did not recognize all major Muslim religious holidays until 1994. Churches always have organized Christian pilgrimages without formal government supervision, but until 1993 the Ministry of the Interior supervised Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca (the Hajj).

During 1991 the Catholic Church began to operate community radio stations, first in Man and later in Abidjan and Yamoussoukro, but Muslim efforts to gain authorization to operate similar stations were unsuccessful until 1999, and Muslim organizations, unlike the Catholic Church, did not venture to operate unlicensed radio stations. Catholic and Protestant radio stations were given formal approval on March 30, 1999, after operating for months without official permission, and the Government granted authorization for an Islamic radio station on April 21, 1999.

The Government has taken positive steps to promote inter-faith understanding. Catholics, Muslims, and Protestants have had their own religious programs on national television and radio for over 20 years. On significant Christian and Islamic holy days, national television often broadcasts films on the life of the founders of those religions. Government officials, including the President and his religious advisers, make a point of appearing at major religious celebrations and events organized by a wide variety of faiths and groups. There is no government-sponsored forum for inter-faith dialog, but the Government often invites leaders of various religious communities (but not of traditional indigenous religious groups) to attend official ceremonies and to sit on deliberative and advisory committees.

Religious instruction is permitted in public schools and usually offered after normal class hours. Most such instruction is offered by established Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant groups.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government monitors minority religions, to the extent of registering them, but does not control them closely. However, some citizens are alarmed by the explosive proliferation of new groups. In his 1999 New Year's greetings, then-President Henri Konan Bedie advised the public to be wary of new groups that are not clearly identified and warned such groups against taking advantage of the country's tradition of tolerance to commit acts of fraud or manipulation. In general, the Government closely watches some religious groups, including Islamic associations and minority groups, for signs of political activity that it considers subversive but otherwise does not monitor them.

The Government does not prohibit links to foreign coreligionists but informally discourages connections with politically radical fundamentalist movements, such as Islamic groups based in Iran and Libya.

While not a direct restriction on religious freedom, some Muslims believe that they are discriminated against when applying for national identity cards. Due to the tense political situation in the country and the ethnic divisions along which political party lines are drawn, northern Muslims sometimes are scrutinized more closely in the identity card application process. As these northern Muslims share names, style of dress, and customs with several of the country's predominantly Muslim neighboring countries, they sometimes are accused wrongly of attempting to obtain illegally nationality cards in order to vote. Although this is not directly a result of their religious belief, this treatment creates a hardship for a disproportionate number of Muslims.

In December 1999, the new military regime requested that the Islamic Superior Council, an organization of imams that was seen as politically active and supportive of the previous regime, disband. The president of the council, Moustapha Diaby, did not oppose this demand, and the council ceased its operations. In March 2000, the Government allowed the council to resume its activities.

In May 2000, the military government warned the imam leaders of the Muslim community to refrain from political discourse in their sermons. The Government claimed the imams had been jeopardizing security with sermons that were too politically charged. In May and June 2000, during travels to various regions in the country, General Guei continually asked imams and other Muslim leaders to stay out of politics.

In March 2000, local governments closed Harrist churches to prevent an escalation of intrareligious violence (see Section II).

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. Once a year, on New Year's Eve, members of all Christian religious groups gather in the National Stadium in Abidjan to keep a nightlong vigil and pray. When serious social problems have arisen, simultaneous prayer ceremonies have been held in churches, temples, and mosques to ask for divine assistance. Kouassi-Datekro, a town in the Akan region in the eastern part of the country, is famous for ecumenical events involving simultaneous prayer services of all faiths. Since 1990 religious leaders from diverse groups have assembled on their own initiative to mediate in times of political conflict; however, no leaders of traditional indigenous religious groups have been included.

The religious group that feels most discriminated against is the largest group, the country's Islamic community. Societal attitudes are responsible for at least some of that feeling. Since the Islamic duty to give alms daily may attract beggars to neighborhoods containing mosques, some non-Muslims have opposed construction of mosques, such as the new mosque in Abidjan's plateau district. Some non-Muslims also find the muezzins' calls to prayer annoying. A few group all Muslims in a common category as foreigners, fundamentalists, or terrorists. Muslim citizens often are treated as foreigners by their fellow citizens, sometimes including government officials, because most Muslims are members of northern ethnic groups also found in other African countries from which there has been substantial immigration into the country.

Followers of traditional indigenous religions also are subject to societal discrimination. Many leaders of nontraditional religions, such as Christianity or Islam, look down on practitioners of traditional indigenous religions as pagans, practitioners of black magic, and practitioners of human sacrifice. Some Christians or Muslims refuse to associate with practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. The contents of traditional indigenous religions often are shrouded by secrecy mechanisms, such as exclusive initiation rites, oaths of silence, and taboos against writing down orally transmitted lore. However, there have been no reports of human sacrifice in the country since well before independence. Although the purported practice of black magic or witchcraft continues to be widely feared, it generally is discouraged by traditional indigenous religions, aspects of which commonly purport to offer protection from witchcraft. Traditional indigenous religions commonly involve belief in one supreme deity as well as lesser deities or spirits that are to be praised or appeased, some of whom may in some religions be believed to inhabit or otherwise be associated with particular places, natural objects, or man-made images.

However, many practitioners of traditional indigenous religions are unaware of societal discrimination and have not complained. The foremost proponent of "Bossonism," Jean Marie Adiaffi, died in 1999. He was organizing practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and demanding equal treatment for its religious leaders. No leader stepped forward to continue his work.

Conflicts between and within religious groups have surfaced occasionally. Members of the Limoudim of Rabbi Jesus, a small Christian group of unknown origin, have criticized and sometimes attacked other Christian groups for allegedly failing to follow the teachings of Jesus. In 1992 a few members of the Limoudim group destroyed several Christian churches and tortured ministers in the Abobo district of Abidjan. They were tried and sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment but released in 1995 after receiving a presidential pardon. In January 1998, a conflict over land erupted between Catholics and Assembly of God members in the Yopougon district of Abidjan. The same area was the scene of a land conflict between Baptists and their neighbors in August 1998.

The Celestial Christians are divided because of a leadership struggle, as are the Harrists, who have come to blows on occasion.

In March 2000, due to the internal struggle in the Harrist Church, clergy leader Barthelemy Akre Yasse struck Harrist National Committee president Tchotche Mel Felix from the church rolls for insubordination. This battle for church leadership at the national level led to violent confrontations between church members at the local level. Local governments, in order to prevent an escalation in the violence, closed Harrist churches in which the confrontations took place.

Prior to the coup, the Islamic leadership was fractured by disagreement between factions, two of which (the Superior Islamic Council and the Ouamma Islamic Front)

were allied with the former ruling party, and two of which (the National Islamic Council and the Islamic Confederation for the Development of Cote d'Ivoire) were unaligned politically and had sought to create Islamic organizations that enjoy the same freedom from unofficial state oversight and guidance that Catholic organizations have long enjoyed. Following the overthrow of the Bedie government in December 1999, the organizations began to work together.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has monitored and reported on the status of religious freedom, developed and maintained contacts with leaders of diverse religious groups, and discussed religious freedom issues with government officials in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

In 1997 with financial assistance from the Embassy, the Research Group in Democracy and Social and Economic Development of Cote d'Ivoire (GERDDES-CI) helped religious groups in the country to establish a Forum of Religious Confessions. All the main religious groups participated in the forum: Catholics, Muslims, various Protestant groups, several syncretist religious groups, and the Association of Traditional Priests. The Forum continued to meet throughout the period covered by this report.

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## DJIBOUTI

The Constitution, while declaring Islam to be the state religion, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, proselytizing is discouraged.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Citizens generally are very tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion. However, recent converts to other religions have faced some discrimination in the past; there were no reports of such discrimination during the period covered by this report.

U.S. embassy officials engage in a regular human rights dialog with government officials, which includes religious freedom issues. Embassy officers also meet with leaders of the religious communities.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution, while declaring Islam to be the state religion, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, proselytizing is discouraged.

Although Islam is the state religion, the Government imposes no sanctions on those who choose to ignore Islamic teachings or practice other faiths. The Qadi is the country's senior judge of Islamic law and is appointed by the Minister of Justice. The current Qadi was appointed in June 1999. His predecessor was named Minister of State for Charitable and Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Justice. This position was created in May 1999, when newly elected President Ismail Omar Guelleh formed his Cabinet and declared that Islam would be a central tenet of his government.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. There were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious groups.

#### *Religious Demography*

Over 99 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim. There are a small number of Catholics, Protestants, and followers of the Baha'i Faith, together accounting for less than 1 percent of the population. The sizable foreign community supports the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. There are no known practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Because all citizens officially are considered Muslims if they do not adhere to another faith, there are no figures available on the number of atheists in the country.

Religion is not taught in public schools.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

There is no legal prohibition against proselytizing; however, proselytizing is discouraged. There were a few occasions when members of the Baha'i Faith were ques-

tioned by the police regarding possible proselytizing activities; however, there were no arrests.

Foreign clergy and missionaries are permitted to perform charitable works and to sell religious books. A small number of foreign Christian missionary groups operate in the country. These groups, which focus on humanitarian services in the education and health sectors, reportedly faced no harassment during the period covered by this report. Foreign missionary groups are licensed by the Government to run schools.

Islamic law based on the Koran is used only with regard to family matters, and is administered by the Qadi. Civil marriage is permitted only for non-Muslim foreigners. Muslims are required to marry in a religious ceremony, and non-Muslim men may only marry a Muslim woman after converting to Islam.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners. Although groups of Ethiopian Pentecostal Christians were arrested and detained for short periods of time in the past, there were no reports of such detentions during the period covered by this report. The past arrests reportedly were due to loud singing that disturbed neighbors, or to a general crackdown on illegal residents, rather than to the Ethiopians' religious faith.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The large presence of French Catholics and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians for almost a century has led to considerable familiarity and tolerance of other faiths by the Muslim majority. The Government established diplomatic relations with the Vatican in May 2000. A group of the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta's Missionaries of Charity was expected to arrive soon thereafter to work among the poor, but had not arrived as of June 30, 2000.

Persons born as Catholics face no discrimination from Muslim relatives. In many cases, these Catholics are children or grandchildren of persons raised in French Catholic orphanages during the colonial period. In the past, recent converts to other religions have faced some discrimination; however, there were no reports of such discrimination during the period covered by this report.

In Djiboutian Somali society, clan membership has more influence over a person's life than religion. Djiboutian Somalis who are Christians often are buried according to Islamic traditions by relatives who do not recognize their non-Muslim faith.

There is no formal inter-faith dialog. The Catholic Church organizes an annual celebration with all the other Christian churches. The Qadi receives Ramadan greetings from Pope John Paul II. He only meets with the heads of other faiths at government-organized ceremonies.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials engage in a regular human rights dialog with government officials, which includes religious freedom issues.

Embassy representatives meet with leaders and members of religious communities and with U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) with a missionary component. In addition, during the period covered by this report an embassy representative participated in a conference for Muslim religious leaders organized by the Qadi.

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## EQUATORIAL GUINEA

The Fundamental Law of 1995 provides for freedom of religion; however the Government limited this right in practice in some respects.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report despite some restrictions on the right of assembly; however, the Government discourages criticism by religious groups, restricts activities outside church premises, and one priest remains in detention.

There generally are amicable relations between the various religious groups in the country.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government during periodic visits to Equatorial Guinea in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The 1995 Fundamental Law provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government limited this right in practice by its restrictions, for example, on the right of assembly.

A religious organization must be formally registered with the Ministry of Justice and Religion before its religious activities are allowed. While religious groups must be approved and registered in order to function legally, there were no reports during the period covered by this report that the Government had refused to register any group. However, information regarding the exact procedure for registering a religious denomination was not available. The Assemblies of God, for example, received official recognition in 1993. From 1987 until 1993, the group was able to operate but was not recognized officially. The approval process usually takes several years, but such delay apparently is due primarily to general bureaucratic slowness and not the result of a clear policy designed to impede the operation of any religious group. The exact number of registered denominations is not available.

##### *Religious Demography*

The population is approximately 93 percent Christian, 5 percent animist, and less than 1 percent each for Muslim, Baha'i, other religions, and those who are nonreligious. The principal religion is Roman Catholicism, dating from the Spanish colonial period, when almost the entire population was baptized into this faith. Of the Christian population, approximately 87 percent are at least nominally Catholic, and approximately 4.5 percent belong to Protestant denominations. In practice the actual figure for tribal religions is likely much higher; moreover, many baptized Catholics reportedly still follow traditional beliefs. There is no known organized worship in large parts of the country, in particular in the center and north of the mainland and on the smaller islands. The ethnic minorities, such as the Ngumba, Yaka, Puku, and Benga have no known organized religious congregations.

##### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government and President Teodoro Obiang Nguema's ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) have reacted defensively to any criticism. They prefer that religious groups stay out of politics and refrain from criticism of the Government and its leadership. The Government requires permission for any activities outside church walls, but in practice this nominal requirement does not appear to be a hindrance to organized religious groups. After the January 1998 coup attempt, all religious groups were summoned by the authorities to assemble in an ecumenical meeting in February 1998 at the stadium in the capital to endorse a public profession against violence. Reportedly, no signed agreement resulted, and there was no communique issued from the meeting.

Religious study is required in schools and is usually, but not exclusively, Catholic. The Government generally allows preaching, religious teaching, education, and practice by believers. Missionaries work throughout the country, generally without impediment, including several dozen American missionaries and their dependents. However, the Government restricted the activities of the Catholic Church.

In July 1998, the Archbishop of Malabo, Laureano Ekua Obama, stated publicly that the Government now requires Catholic priests to obtain government permission before celebrating Mass, and commented that the Government does this because the Church repeatedly has denounced human rights violations, social injustice, and corruption in the country. The Archbishop also stated that government harassment made it very difficult to be a Catholic priest in the country. Nonetheless, a 1992 law includes a stated official preference towards the Catholic Church and the Reform Church of Equatorial Guinea due to their traditional roots and well-known influence in the social and cultural life of the populace. For example, a Roman Catholic mass is normally part of any major ceremonial function such as the October 12 national day.

The Government relaxed some restrictions on religious activities by foreign missionaries in 1996. Missionaries in Bata and Malabo reported little government interference in their work. However, in January 1998 in Bata, the largest town on the mainland, security forces broke up a religious revival conducted by a popular European evangelist and expelled him from the country. According to several sources, the governor of Bata and the police chief expelled the evangelist and his group the

following day in order to take possession of the evangelist's vehicles, sound system, and other equipment. Diplomatic intervention by a number of foreign governments allowed the evangelist to depart with his vehicles.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In February 1998, security forces arrested a priest, Father Eduardo Losoha Belope—a member of the Bubi ethnic group and president of the Malabo chapter of the Catholic nongovernmental organization, Caritas—in connection with the January 21, 1998 revolt. Father Belope still is being held and was one of the Bubi prisoners transferred in March 2000 from Bioko Island to Evinayong on the mainland.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally are amicable relations between the various religious groups in the country. Some religious groups believe that they face societal pressures within their regions. However, no specific incidents or violence stemming from religious discrimination have been reported, and such concerns may reflect ethnic or individual as much as religious differences.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Yaounde, Cameroon maintains contact with religious groups, especially American missionaries in the country, and monitors any religious initiatives during periodic visits. During the period covered by this report, embassy staff met with various religious leaders, including members of the Catholic hierarchy, Protestant missionaries, and religiously affiliated nongovernmental organizations.

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## ERITREA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The Government bans religious organizations from involvement in politics and restricts the right of religious media to comment on political matters. The Government discourages proselytizing by members of one faith among adherents of another and also discourages foreign religious groups and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) from proselytizing, as it believes that this could create unnecessary friction in the delicate balance between the Muslim and Christian populations. The Government continued to harass, arrest, detain, and discriminate against members of the small community of Jehovah's Witnesses. Citizens generally are very tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion; however, societal attitudes toward Jehovah's Witnesses are the exception to this widespread tolerance.

The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with leaders of the religious community and the Government's director of religious affairs. Embassy officers have raised the case of Jehovah's Witnesses with government officials.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. The Constitution provides for the freedom to practice any religion and to "manifest such practice," and Islam and Christianity are practiced widely and tolerated throughout the country with persons free to worship at the mosque or church of their choice; however, the Government continued to harass, arrest, detain, and discriminate against members of the small community of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Government does not require religious groups to register. However, because the Government owns all land, any religious organization that seeks facilities for

worship other than private homes must seek government approval to build such facilities. There were no reports that the Government refused to approve the use or construction of facilities by any religious organization. Religious organizations, including religious NGO's, do not receive duty free privileges, although they sometimes are allowed to import items under the reduced duty structure used for corporations. The Government prohibits political activity by religious groups, and the Government's Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Local Government monitors religious compliance with this proscription against political activity.

#### *Religious Demography*

Although reliable statistics are not available, approximately 50 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim and approximately 40 percent are Orthodox Christian. The population also includes a small number of Eastern Rite and Roman Catholics (5 percent), Protestants (2 percent), smaller numbers of Seventh-Day Adventists, and less than 1,500 members of Jehovah's Witnesses. A small minority, perhaps 2 percent, practices traditional indigenous religions. Also present in very small numbers are practicing Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, and Baha'is. Generally, the eastern and western lowlands are predominantly Muslims, and the highlands are predominantly Christian. There are very few atheists.

Some foreign missionaries operate in the country, including representatives of Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim faiths. There also are several international religious NGO's that provide humanitarian aid, including Caritas, Dutch Interchurch Aid, Lutheran Church Aid, and the Mufti's Relief Organization, the relief arm of the Muslim religion.

The Government's Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Local Government encourages cooperation and inter-faith dialog. The Directorate helps coordinate interdenominational relations among the four major religious groups (Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Catholic, and Protestant).

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government discourages proselytizing by members of one faith among adherents of another and also discourages foreign religious groups and NGO's from proselytizing, as it believes that this could create unnecessary friction in the delicate balance between the Muslim and Christian populations.

In a 1995 proclamation, the Government described specific guidelines on the role of religion and religion-affiliated NGO's in development and government, stating that development, politics, and public administration are the sole responsibility of the Government and citizens.

The 1995 Proclamation bans religious organizations from involvement in politics and restricts the right of religious media to comment on political matters. Pursuant to the 1995 proclamation, religious organizations are permitted to fund, but not initiate or implement, development projects; however, this proclamation was not enforced in practice—several religious organizations executed small-scale development projects without government interference. The proclamation also set out rules governing relations between religious organizations and foreign sponsors.

Authorities informed all religious organizations in April 1998 that all schools run by religious denominations would be incorporated into the public school system. At the time it was not made clear whether the clerical authorities would continue to administer the curriculum with government oversight or whether the school faculty would be absorbed into the Ministry of Education. However, no action was taken to implement this initiative because of the outbreak of the border conflict with Ethiopia. In January 1998, the Government decreed that religiously affiliated organizations were prohibited from running kindergartens; however, this decree was never carried out. According to officials in the Religious Affairs Office, the Government is expected to allow religious schools to operate independently as long as they adhere to a standard curriculum.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Jehovah's Witnesses have several churches and members are not barred from meeting in private homes; however, the Government continued to harass, arrest, detain, and discriminate against members of the small community of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1994 the Government revoked the trading licenses of some members of Jehovah's Witnesses and dismissed most of those who worked in the civil service. This governmental action resulted in economic, employment, and travel difficulties for many members of Jehovah's Witnesses, especially former civil servants and businessmen. In April 1997, the Government labor office issued a form to all employers in Asmara and the surrounding area requesting information on any government personnel who were members of Jehovah's Witnesses. In addition to these measures,

members of Jehovah's Witnesses also often are denied identification cards, exit visas, trading licenses, and government housing unless they hide their religion.

Members of Jehovah's Witnesses have refused universally on religious grounds to participate in national service or to vote. This has spurred widespread criticism that members of Jehovah's Witnesses collectively were shirking their civic duty. Some Muslims also have objected to universal national service because of the requirement that women perform military duty. Although persons from other religious groups, including Muslims, reportedly have been imprisoned for failure to participate in national service, only members of Jehovah's Witnesses have been subject to dismissal from the civil service, had their trading licenses revoked, and been denied passports for this reason.

In 1998 several members of Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested for failure to comply with national service laws and some were tried, although there is no information available regarding the verdicts or sentences in these cases. In March 1999, representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses reported that three members of Jehovah's Witnesses had been detained without trial or charge for more than 4 years, allegedly for failing to participate in national service. The maximum penalty for refusing to do national service is only 3 years.

Ministry of Justice officials deny that any members of Jehovah's Witnesses were held without charges, although they acknowledge that some members of Jehovah's Witnesses and a number of Muslims are in jail serving sentences for convictions on charges of evading national service. The Government does not excuse individuals who object to national service for reasons of conscience, nor does the Government allow alternative service. There is no indication that any persons are detained or imprisoned solely because of their religious beliefs or practices; however, the Government has singled out members of Jehovah's Witnesses for harsher treatment than that received by members of other faiths for similar actions.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Citizens generally are very tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion. Mosques and Christian churches of all orders coexist throughout the country, although Islam tends to predominate in the lowlands and Christianity in the highlands.

In Asmara Christians and Muslim holidays are respected by all religions. Some holidays are celebrated jointly.

In 1999 leaders of the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Muslim faiths created Good Deeds in Unity, an organization to help ethnic Eritrean expellees in Eritrea, Eritreans displaced by the war, and other needy persons in Eritrea. This organization works with the government relief agency, the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Affairs Commission.

Societal attitudes toward Jehovah's Witnesses are the exception to widespread religious tolerance. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses generally are disliked because of their refusal to participate in the independence referendum in 1993 and to perform national service, a refusal that is widely seen as unpatriotic.

Church leaders of most denominations, in particular, leaders of the Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant denominations, meet routinely and engage in ongoing efforts to foster cooperation and understanding between religions, with the major exception of Jehovah's Witnesses. Leaders of the four major religious organizations meet routinely and enjoy excellent inter-faith relations. In July 2000, in Oslo, Norway, leaders, these leaders met with their Ethiopian counterparts for the fourth time in an ecumenical peace effort to resolve the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with leaders of the religious community and the Government's Director of Religious Affairs.

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officers have raised the special case of Jehovah's Witnesses with government officials in the President's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Court, the Ministry of Justice, and in media interviews.



## ETHIOPIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on occasion local authorities infringed on this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

In general government policy contributes to the free practice of religion. However, Muslim leaders complained that public school authorities sometimes interfered with their free practice of Islam. Protestant groups occasionally complain that local officials discriminate against them when seeking land for churches and cemeteries. While the relationship among religions in society is generally amicable, there continued to be pockets of interreligious tension and criticism between followers of evangelical and Pentecostal churches, on the one hand, and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, on the other.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with the leaders of all of the religious communities.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on occasion local authorities infringed on this right. The Constitution requires the separation of church and state.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. Religious institutions, like nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), are registered with the Ministry of Justice, and must renew their registration every year. Unlike NGO's, religious groups are not subject to a rigorous registration process. Under current law, a religious organization that undertakes development activities must register its development wing separately as an NGO.

Religious groups are not accorded duty-free status. Most religious groups, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses, are given free government land for churches, schools, hospitals, and cemeteries; however, the title to the land remains with the Government, and the land, other than that used for prayer houses or cemeteries, can be taken back at any time. Religious groups, like private individuals or businesses, must apply to regional and local governments for land allocation. An interfaith effort is underway to promote revision of the law since it affects the duty-free status of religious groups.

#### *Religious Demography*

Over 40 percent of the population adhere to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), the single largest religious group. The EOC claims 50 percent of the country's total population of 61.7 million, or more than 31 million adherents, and 110,405 churches. The EOC is predominant in the northern regions of Tigray and Amhara. Approximately 40 percent of the population are Muslim, although many Muslims claim that the actual percentage is higher. Islam is most prevalent in the Somali and Afar regions, as well as in parts of Oromia. Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism are the fastest growing faiths and now constitute more than 10 percent of the population. According to the Evangelical Church Fellowship, there are 7.4 million Protestants, although this figure may be on the high side. Established Protestant churches such as Mekane Yesus and Kale Hiwot are strongest in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR), western and central Oromia, and in urban areas around the country. Roman Catholics, animists, and other traditional indigenous religions make up most of the remaining population. There are very few atheists.

In Addis Ababa and western Gondar in the Amhara region there are very small concentrations of Ethiopian Jews (Falashas) and those who claim that their ancestors were forced to convert from Judaism to Ethiopian Orthodoxy (Feles Mora). Approximately 3,000 Feles Mora migrated voluntarily from the western Amhara region to Addis Ababa in 1991 at the time of "Operation Solomon," when a large number of Falashas were airlifted to Israel. The Feles Mora also seek immigration to Israel. The number of Feles Mora in the country has grown to approximately 9,000. Israeli officials evaluate the Feles Mora immigration claims on a case-by-case basis and estimate that approximately 20 percent of the Feles Mora eventually may be able to immigrate under Israel's law of return. In June 1999, the Israeli Government announced that 3,500 Falashas requesting citizenship would be airlifted from Quara,

Ethiopia to Israel. All of the eligible Falashas in Quara left for Israel by December 31, 1999.

There are more than 6,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in the country. When the Government began deporting Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin in 1998, it decided that Jehovah's Witnesses of Eritrean origin, who might face religious persecution in Eritrea, were not to be subject to deportation.

Although precise data are not available, active participation in religious services is high throughout the country.

A large number of foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Catholic and American Protestant missionaries. Protestant organizations, operating under the umbrella of the 12-member Evangelical Church Fellowship of Ethiopia, sponsor or support missionary work: the Baptist Bible Fellowship, the New Covenant Baptist Church, the Baptist Evangelical Association, Mekane Yesus Church (associated with the Lutheran Church), Kale Hiwot Church (associated with Sim-Service in Mission), Hiwot Berhan Church (associated with the Swedish Philadelphia Church), Genet Church (associated with the Finnish Mission), Lutheran-Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia, Emnet Christos, Muluwongel (Full Gospel) Church, and Messerete Kristos (associated with the Mennonite Mission). There is also missionary activity among Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

The Government officially recognizes both Christian and Muslim holidays, and has mandated a 2-hour lunch break on Fridays to allow Muslims to go to a mosque to pray. The Government also agreed to a request from Muslim students at Addis Ababa Commercial College to delay the start of afternoon classes until 1:30 p.m. to permit them to perform afternoon prayers at a nearby mosque.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government does not issue work visas to foreign religious workers unless they are attached to the development wing of a religious organization.

Evangelical leaders have complained of strict regulations on the importation of Bibles, as well as heavy customs duty on Bibles and other religious articles; however, Bibles and religious articles are subject to the same customs duty as all imported books and most imported items.

Muslim leaders complained that public school authorities sometimes interfered with their free practice of Islam. Certain public school teachers in the SNNPR, Addis Ababa, and in the Amhara region objected to Muslim schoolgirls covering their heads with scarves while at school. In September 1999, Muslim girls who had boycotted classes in Woldeia in the Amhara region over the issue of wearing headscarves to class, returned to classes with their scarves.

The Government has interpreted the constitutional provision for separation of church and state to mean that religious instruction is not permitted in schools, whether they are public or private schools. Catholic, Orthodox, evangelical, and Muslim-owned and operated schools are not permitted to teach religion as a course of study. Most private schools teach a morals course as part of the school's curriculum, and the Government Education Bureau in Addis Ababa has complained that such courses are not free of religious influence. Churches are permitted to have Sunday schools, the Koran is taught at mosques, and public schools permit the formation of clubs, including those of a religious nature.

Protestant groups occasionally complain that local officials discriminate against them when seeking land for churches and cemeteries. Evangelical leaders complain that because they are perceived as "newcomers" they remain at a disadvantage compared with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Supreme Islamic Council when it comes to the allocation of land. In January 1998, the Government returned evangelical church property that was seized under the Mengistu regime (including the Mekane Yesus Church headquarters, which served as Federal Police headquarters until 1997); however, the Government still has not returned other properties to the Mekane Yesus Church, including three student hostels and two schools. The Government also has not returned to the Seventh-Day Adventists properties taken by the prior regime, including two hospitals.

In past years there were instances of conflict among religious groups, most noticeably between Orthodox Christians, on the one hand, and evangelicals and Pentecostals, on the other. While in past years some Pentecostals and evangelicals complained that the police failed to protect them adequately during instances of interreligious conflict, there were no complaints of inadequate police protection during the period covered by this report. In most interreligious disputes, the Government maintains neutrality and tries to be an impartial arbitrator.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Despite the country's broad level of religious freedom and tolerance for established faiths, there were instances of open conflict among religious groups before 1998, most noticeably between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians on the one hand, and Pentecostals and evangelicals on the other, and there continued to be pockets of interreligious tension and criticism during the period covered by this report. Newer faiths such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals have encountered overt opposition from the public. Muslims and Orthodox Christians complain about proselytization by Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses. Ethiopian Orthodox leaders complain that sometimes Protestants fail to respect Orthodox holy days and Orthodox customs. Muslims complain that some Pentecostal preachers disparage Islam in their services. There were complaints by Muslim leaders that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's desire to "show supremacy" sometimes caused irritation in the regions. There are credible reports that the bodies of non-Orthodox Christians have been disinterred from Orthodox cemeteries and left exposed outside the cemetery grounds. In past years, Protestant and Pentecostal leaders have complained that, on occasion, Orthodox or evangelical adherents interrupted Protestant and Pentecostal religious meetings; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report. Orthodox and evangelical adherents attempted on a few occasions to prevent the construction of Protestant and Pentecostal churches in predominantly Orthodox or evangelical areas.

Nevertheless in most sections of the country Orthodox Christians and Muslims participate in each other's religious observances, and there is tolerance for intermarriage and conversion in certain areas, most notably in Welo, as well as in urban areas throughout the country. In the capital, Addis Ababa, persons of different faiths often live side-by-side. Most urban areas reflect a mixture of all religious denominations. Longstanding evangelical Protestant denominations, particularly the Mekane Yesus Church and Kale Hiwot Churches, provide social services such as health care and education to nonmembers as well as to members.

In April 2000, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the chairman of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church and the president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus issued a joint statement appealing to the international community for immediate humanitarian assistance to victims of drought in the country.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with the leaders of all of the religious communities. Embassy officers made an active effort to visit all of the religious groups and religious NGO's during the period covered by this report. Embassy officers met with the Supreme Islamic Council, Sim-Serving in Mission, Mekane Yesus, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Catholic Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Ambassador held a series of meetings with religious leaders, including the Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarch and the president of the Supreme Islamic Council to discuss their responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Ambassador also met with the Vatican Papal Nuncio, the executive director of the Mekane Yesus Church, the director of Sim-Serving in Mission, and the president of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to discuss the status of religious freedom and development issues. The U.S. Ambassador remains in regular contact with the American Joint Distribution Committee to discuss the situation of the country's Jewish population.

In 1998 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) entered into a 5-year agreement with the Ethiopian Orthodox Development Assistance Authority to provide food commodities and grants to support food security programs in four areas. The value of the program during the period covered by this report was approximately \$4,700,000.

In August 1999, USAID awarded the Ethiopian Orthodox Church a \$350,000 grant to support programs to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS. The development arm of Mekane Yesus Church has been a USAID contractor since 1996. In December

1999, USAID renewed the contract with Mekane Yesus and increased the amount to \$258,000 annually. In May 2000, USAID awarded the Supreme Islamic Council a \$145,000 grant to support programs to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS.

## GABON

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. A 1983 decree banning Jehovah's Witnesses, which the Government promulgated on the grounds that Jehovah's Witnesses allegedly do not adequately protect individuals who might dissent from the group's views, remained in effect; however, the Government did not enforce the ban.

The Ministry of the Interior maintains an official registry of some religious groups; however, it does not register traditional religious groups. The Government does not require religious groups to register but recommends that they do so in order to assemble with full constitutional protection. No financial or tax benefit is conferred by registration. The Government has refused to register approximately 10 religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses. In practice, the Government allows Jehovah's Witnesses to assemble and practice their religion. In addition, the Government has made uncorroborated claims that it permits Jehovah's Witnesses to proselytize.

#### *Religious Demography*

Major religions practiced in the country include Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism), Islam, and traditional indigenous religions. Government statistics indicate that about 60 percent of the country's citizens practice Christianity, almost 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, and only 1 percent practice Islam. However, Muslims make up a much larger proportion of the total population, especially among noncitizens. Moreover, many persons practice both elements of Christianity and elements of traditional indigenous religions. It is estimated that approximately 73 percent of the population practice at least some elements of Christianity, about 12 percent practice Islam, about 10 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively, and about 5 percent practice no religion.

Noncitizens constitute approximately 20 percent of the population. A significant portion of these noncitizens come from countries in West Africa with large Muslim populations. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of the 12 percent of the total population who practice Islam are foreigners. However, the country's President is a member of the Muslim minority.

Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant denominations operate primary and secondary schools in the country. These schools are required to register with the Ministry of Education, which is charged with ensuring that these religious schools meet the same standards required for public schools. The Government does not contribute funds to private schools, whether religious or secular.

There are no media operated by religious denominations, although several radio and television stations apportion some airtime for religious programming.

The Government promotes inter-faith relations by facilitating meetings of leaders of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and the Islamic Council. Such meetings are held periodically, usually once every year or two.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the different religions are very amicable. There were no reports of interreligious violence or intrareligious incidents during the period covered by this report.

There were occasional incidents of violence in which practitioners of some traditional indigenous religions inflicted bodily harm on other persons. However, the details of these incidents are uncertain. The Ministry of the Interior maintained that violence and bodily harm to others in the practice of a traditional religion is a criminal offense and is prosecuted vigorously. Media reports suggested that this was true; however, little information about such prosecutions or their results is available.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials have met with leaders of the Catholic Church, as well as the Islamic Superior Council. Contacts are maintained with the Ministry of Interior to discuss the general state of religion in the country. The Embassy also maintains close contacts with various Christian missionary groups in the country.

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**THE GAMBIA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The Government does not require religious groups to register. Religiously based nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) are subject to the same registration and licensing requirements as other NGO's.

*Religious Demography*

Muslims constitute over 90 percent of the population. The main Muslim branches are Tijaniyah, Qadiriyyah, Muridiyah, and Ahmadiyah. Except for the Ahmadiyah, all branches pray together at common mosques. An estimated 9 percent of the population practice Christianity and 1 percent practice animism. The Christian community is predominantly Roman Catholic; there also are several Protestant denominations, including Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and various small Protestant evangelical denominations.

The Government permits and does not limit religious instruction in schools. Bible and Koranic studies are provided in both public and private schools throughout the country without government restriction or interference. Religious instruction in public schools is provided at government expense, but is not mandatory.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government still refuses to allow the imam of the largest mosque in Brikama to lead prayers at the mosque, both as a result of a 1998 dispute over construction work at a mosque and due to pressure from his opponents in the community. The High Court ruled in favor of the imam in February 1999 and acquitted him of charges of destruction of property. However, the Government has appealed to the Supreme Court; the appeal remained pending at mid-2000.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities. Inter-marriage between members of different religious groups is legal and socially acceptable.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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**GHANA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on at least one occasion local government officials restricted this right. The Government does not always prosecute those responsible for religious violence.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In an effort to improve societal respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, the Government was more proactive in addressing the management of religious conflicts than in previous years.

The Government assisted in mediating interreligious disputes. While tension persists between the Christian community and traditional authorities over the annual ban on drumming in the ethnic Ga traditional area, both groups agreed to exercise restraint; there were no reports of violence during the spring 2000 annual ban. Despite laws banning the practice, a form of religious slavery at trokosi shrines exists on a limited scale. Government officials supported the forced polio vaccination of children in a local church. Police prevented worshipers from attending a church service conducted by a Catholic priest who was performing unorthodox "healing." Isolated incidents of violent conflict between different religious groups led to injuries and property damage. There were no reports of intra-Muslim clashes during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy has supported civil society efforts to address religious freedom issues.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. However, the Government does not always prosecute those responsible for religiously motivated attacks. For example, none of those who attacked churches during the 1999 annual ban on drumming (see Section II) were arrested or charged with an offense. Police authorities said that pursuing the cases only would exacerbate tensions. No suspects were charged in the firebombing of a Christian charismatic church in December 1996 and March 1998. The cases of those arrested following intra-Muslim clashes in Wenchi and Kumasi in 1998 are pending with the attorney general.

Religious institutions that wish formal recognition are required to register with the Registrar General's Department. This is a formality only. Most traditional religions, with the exception of the Afrikania Mission, do not register. Formally recognized religions receive some tax relief. However, beyond a certain point the institutions are required to pay tax. In 1989 during the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) regime, which ruled the country from 1981 to 1992, a law requiring the registration of religious bodies was passed in an effort to regulate churches. The Ghana Council of Churches interpreted this law as contradicting the concept of religious freedom in the country. The PNDC repealed the law in 1992.

*Religious Demography*

About 40 percent of the country's estimated population of 18 million are at least nominally Christian. Christian denominations include Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Mennonite, Evangelical Presbyterian, Presbyterian, African Methodist

Episcopal Zionist, Christian Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, F'eden, numerous charismatic faiths, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventist, Pentecostal, Baptist, and the Society of Friends. Christianity often includes an overlay of traditional beliefs.

About 30 percent of the population adhere to traditional indigenous religions or other religions. These religions include a belief in a supreme being, referred to by the Akan ethnic group as Nyame or by the Ewe ethnic group as Mawu, and lesser gods who act as intermediaries between the supreme being and man on earth. Veneration of ancestors also is a characteristic, as they too provide a link between the supreme being and the living and even may be reincarnated at times. The religious leaders of those sharing these diverse beliefs commonly are referred to as priests and are trained in the arts of healing and divination. These priests typically operate shrines to the supreme deity or to one of the lesser gods, relying upon the donations of the public to maintain the shrine and for their own maintenance.

About 25 percent of the population are Muslim. Three principal branches of Islam are represented in the country: the orthodox Sunnis and Tijanis, and the less orthodox Ahmadis. The Shi'a branch virtually is absent from the country's Islamic community.

Other religions include the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Ninchiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Sera, Sat Sang, Eckanker, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna, Rastafarianism, and other international faiths, as well as some separatist or spiritual churches or cults, which include elements of Christianity and traditional beliefs such as magic and divination. A new practice has emerged called "Zetahil," which combines elements of Christianity and Islam. Some consider the ethnic Ga tradition to be a religion (see Section II).

There are no statistics for the percentage of atheists. Atheism, as such, does not have a strong presence, as most persons have some spiritual and traditional beliefs.

The majority of the Muslim population is concentrated in the urban centers of Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tamale, and Wa. The followers of the more traditional religions mainly dwell in the rural areas of the country. Christians live throughout the country.

Reportedly, only 1.9 million of those persons who profess the Christian faith actually attend church. However, this figure appears to be lower than the actual number of persons who attend services.

Religions considered to be "foreign" include the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Ninchiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Sera, Sat Sang, Eckanker, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna, and Rastafarianism. The Government neither monitors nor advises these organizations.

Foreign missionary groups, including Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Mormon groups, operated throughout the country with a minimum of formal requirements or restrictions.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

On February 20, 2000, the Ho district (Volta region) chief executive led a joint operation with police and health personnel to immunize the children at an Apostolic Faith of Kpalexose ("Well-Rooted Faith" in the Ewe language) church, a local church founded in 1931, against poliomyelitis. Church members consistently have refused immunizations on the grounds that their faith forbids the use of orthodox medicine. Police surrounded the church during worship services and health personnel administered the vaccine. It was reported that 155 children up to age 5 received the vaccine. The community reportedly supported the overriding of individual religious convictions as being in the greater national interest of eradicating polio.

The Catholic Church in the archdiocese of Accra officially suspended a priest for conducting unorthodox "healing" services. His superiors called his actions a failure to comply with his vows of obedience and a lack of responsibility and respect toward his superiors—especially the Bishop. When the accused priest was conducting one of these healing services, the gates to the cathedral were locked, and police personnel prevented worshipers from entering the church premises.

The Government requires that all students in public schools up to the equivalent of senior secondary school level attend a daily "assembly" or devotional service; however, in practice this regulation is not always enforced. This is a Christian service and includes the recital of The Lord's Prayer, a Bible reading, and a blessing. Students at the senior secondary school level are required to attend a similar assembly three times a week. Students attending boarding school are required to attend a nondenominational service on Sundays.

Government employees, including the President, are required to take an oath on taking office. However, this oath can be either religious or secular, depending on the wishes of the person taking the oath.

The Government took some steps to promote inter-faith understanding. At government meetings and receptions there usually is a multid denominational invocation. Often religious leaders from various faiths are present.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Although the Constitution prohibits slavery, religious slavery—*trokosi*—exists on a limited scale. In June 1998, Parliament passed and the President signed legislation to ban the practice of *trokosi* in comprehensive legislation to protect women and children's rights. Human rights activists believe that the goal of eradicating the *trokosi* practice is attainable with the new law; however, the practice persists (see Section II).

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

The Government was more proactive in addressing the management of religious conflicts. The Greater Accra Regional Coordinating Council conducted a workshop on managing religious conflicts in April 2000, several weeks before the annual ban on drumming (May 8 to June 8), which resulted in a workable compromise between religious and traditional leaders. The participants agreed that in 2000, drumming should be subdued and confined inside churches, in order for the traditionalists and Christians each to practice their beliefs unhindered and preclude a repeat of the spring 1999 violence. Also in April 2000, the National Commission for Civic Education held an inter-faith forum to address religious conflict. Discussion centered on the idea that freedom of worship must be preserved, and religious groups therefore should respect each other's religious beliefs and practices. There were no reports of violence during spring 2000. In May 2000, the Upper West Regional Coordinating Council resolved a dispute between five Pentecostal churches and landowners in Jirapa (see Section II). During a Muslim celebration, a deputy minister of education appealed to citizens not to use religion and mode of dress to define citizenship.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and spokesmen for these communities often advocate tolerance toward different religions. Debate continued over religious worship versus traditional practices and respect for the rights and customs of others in a diverse society.

During the period covered by this report, there was tension between practitioners of the ethnic Ga (the Ga are the original inhabitants of Accra) tradition (which some consider to be a religion) and members of some charismatic churches over the annual ban by Ga traditional leaders on drumming and noise-making prior to the Ga "Homowo" (harvest) festival. Traditionalists believed that their time-honored beliefs should be accorded due respect, while some Christians resented the imposition of bans, which they believed infringed on their right to worship as they pleased.

Three incidents of violence were reported during the 1999 ban on drumming (see Section I). On May 15, May 29, and May 30, 1999, groups of men attacked churches that were not observing the drumming ban. Some church equipment and money was stolen, and a church facility was vandalized. There were some minor injuries but no fatalities. There were no reports of violence during the May 8 to June 8, 2000 ban. One chieftancy dispute in the La district of the Ga traditional area was resolved through the intervention of President Rawlings, before violence erupted.

Although the Constitution prohibits slavery, religious slavery exists on a limited scale. *Trokosi*, a traditional practice found among the Ewe ethnic group and primarily in the Volta region, is an especially severe human rights abuse and a flagrant violation of women's and children's rights. It is a system in which a young girl, usually under the age of 10 years, is given by her family as a slave to a fetish shrine for offenses allegedly committed by a member of the girl's family. The belief is that, if someone in the family has committed a crime, such as stealing, members of the family may begin to die in large numbers unless a young girl is given to the local fetish shrine to atone for the offense. The girl becomes the property of the fet-



ish priest, must work on the priest's farm, and perform other labors for him. Because they are the sexual property of the priests, most trokosi slaves have children by them. Although the girls' families must provide for their needs, such as food, most are unable to do so. There are an estimated 2,000 women and girls bound to various shrines in the trokosi system, a figure that does not include the slaves' children. Even when freed by her fetish priest from the more onerous aspects of her bondage, whether voluntarily or as a result of intervention by activists, a trokosi woman generally has few marketable skills and little hope of marriage and typically remains bound to the shrine for life by psychological and social pressure arising from a traditional belief that misfortune may befall a trokosi woman's family or village if she abandons her obligations to the shrine. When a fetish slave dies, her family is expected to replace her with another young girl, thus perpetuating the bondage to the fetish shrine from generation to generation.

In June 1998, Parliament passed and the President signed legislation to ban the practice of trokosi in comprehensive legislation to protect women and children's rights. Human rights activists believe that the goal of eradicating the trokosi practice is attainable with the new law. Nongovernmental organizations, such as International Needs, and government agencies, like the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), have been campaigning against trokosi for several years and are familiar with the locations of the fetish shrines and the numbers of women and children enslaved. Activists know the community leaders and fetish priests and thus know with whom to negotiate. CHRAJ and International Needs have had some success in approaching village authorities and fetish priests at over 316 shrines, winning the release of nearly 1,000 trokosi slaves as of mid-2000 and retraining them for new professions. The followers of Trokosi claim this to be a religion, but the Government does not recognize it as such.

There have been occasional reports of interreligious and intrareligious incidents, but no violent incidents based on religious affiliation. There were no reports of intra-Muslim violence during the period covered by this report.

In November 1999, in Agona Nyakrom, central region, a dispute during a soccer game between an Islamic middle school and a Methodist middle school led to arson and other destruction of property (corn mills, livestock, approximately 100 houses, and 3 mosques). A group of youths also attacked Muslims in the area, including the headmaster of the Islamic school, who was beaten severely. Five persons suffered gunshot wounds. Police detained 30 men, including a chief. Newspapers reported that as a result of the conflict, large numbers of Muslims moved out of the area.

Members of the Christo Asafo Christian church clashed with members of the Boade Baaka traditional shrine on January 25, 2000, at Taifa, greater Accra region. The dispute arose days earlier after shrine members accused a Christian woman of witchcraft. In the process, the woman was injured slightly and a crowd formed. Christo Asafo members attacked the shrine in retaliation. There were some minor injuries. Police did not arrest or prosecute any of the participants, but continue to investigate the incident.

In March 2000, a dispute between five Pentecostal churches and landowners (tendaabas) created tension in Jirapa, Upper West region. After a member of the Kingdom of God ministries allegedly burned down a local shrine, the tendaabas banned religious activities of all churches except the Roman Catholic Church, until May 2000, when the regional coordinating council brokered a resolution (see Section I).

The clergy and other religious leaders actively discourage religiously motivated violence, discrimination, or harassment.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy monitors religious freedom in the country and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

Embassy officers meet with various leaders of religious communities in the country from time to time. The Embassy supported dialog between religious leaders and civil society. Embassy officers attended the opening ceremony of the greater Accra workshop on managing religious conflict (see Section I).

## GUINEA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between the various religions are generally amicable; however, in some areas, strong social pressure discourages non-Muslims from practicing their religion openly, and the Government tends to defer to local Muslim sensibilities. While the Government has been accused of favoring Muslims in positions of power, some non-Muslims hold relatively important positions. There have been no recent reports of government interference with missionary activity.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and permits religious communities to govern themselves without state interference; the Government generally respects this right in practice.

A government-sponsored organization, the National Islamic League (NIL), represents the country's Sunni Muslim majority, which comprises some 85 percent of the population. The Government requires that all recognized Christian churches join the Association of Churches and Missions in order to benefit from certain government privileges such as tax benefits and energy subsidies. Missionary groups are required to make a declaration of their aims and activities to the Ministry of Interior or to the National Islamic League.

##### *Religious Demography*

Islam is demographically, socially, and culturally the dominant religion. According to credible estimates, some 85 percent of the population profess Islam, while 10 percent follow various Christian faiths, and 5 percent hold traditional indigenous beliefs. Muslims in the country generally adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam; adherents of the Shi'a branch remain relatively few, although they are increasing in number. Among the Christian groups, there are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventist, and other Christian evangelical churches active in the country and recognized by the Government. The small Baha'i community practices its faith openly and freely, although it is not officially recognized. There are small numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, and practitioners of traditional Chinese religions among the expatriate community. Few, if any, citizens profess atheism.

Geographically, Muslims are a majority in all four major regions. Christians are most numerous in the capital, in lower Guinea, and in the forest region. Christians are found in all large towns throughout the country, with the exception of the Fouta Jallon region of middle Guinea, where the Puhlar (or Fulani or Peuhl) ethnic group fiercely opposes the establishment of religious communities other than Islamic ones. Traditional indigenous religions are most prevalent in the forest region.

No data is available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals, but the National Islamic League estimates that 70 percent of Muslims practice their faith regularly.

Although there are no known organized heterogeneous or syncretistic religious communities, both Islam and Christianity have developed syncretistic tendencies, which reflect the continuing influence and acceptability of traditional indigenous beliefs and rituals.

The country's large immigrant and refugee populations generally practice the same faiths as citizens, although those from neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone have higher percentages of Christians and adherents of traditional indigenous religions.

The National Islamic League's stated policy is to promote better relations with other religious denominations and dialog aimed at ameliorating interethnic and interreligious tensions. Although the Government and the NIL have spoken out against the proliferation of Shi'a fundamentalist groups on the grounds that they "generate confusion and deviation" within the country's Islamic family, they have not restricted the religious activities of these groups.

##### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

With rare exceptions, foreign missionary groups and church-affiliated relief agencies operate freely in the country. These include Roman Catholic, Philafricaine, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and many American missionary societies. There have been no recent reports that government officials obstructed or limited missionary activities by Jehovah's Witnesses.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Government support of the powerful, semi-official National Islamic League has led some non-Muslims to complain that the Government uses its influence to favor Muslims over non-Muslims, although non-Muslims are represented in the Cabinet, administrative bureaucracy, and the armed forces. Conversions of senior officials to Islam, such as the Defense Minister, are ascribed to the NIL's efforts to influence the religious beliefs of senior government leaders. The Government refrains from appointing non-Muslims to important administrative positions in certain parts of the country, in deference to the particularly strong social dominance of Islam in these regions.

There were no reports that the Government required government ministers to take an oath on either the Koran or the Bible, a requirement that provoked criticism when it was imposed—apparently for the only time—in April 1999.

The Government utilizes all religious groups in its civic education efforts and national prayers for peace. The Government does not have a specific program to promote inter-faith understanding.

Both Muslim and Christian holidays are recognized by the Government and celebrated by the population.

The government-controlled official press reports on religious events involving both Islamic and Christian groups.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religions are generally amicable; however, in some parts of the country, Islam's dominance is such that there is strong social pressure that discourages non-Muslims from practicing their religion openly.

In January 2000, violent clashes between Christian and Muslim villages in the forest region left 30 people dead. According to both the Secretary General of the Islamic League and the Archbishop of Conakry, the violence was due primarily to a long-running conflict over rights to land, and were not based on religion. The Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization visited the area to investigate the dispute. Although the dispute calmed down after the Minister's visit, the region remains tense.

There are no significant ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different faiths.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains contact with clergy and religious leaders from all major religious communities, monitors developments affecting religious freedom, and discusses religious freedom issues with government officials in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

**GUINEA-BISSAU**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in

full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government requires that religious groups be licensed; however, no applications have been refused. There were no reports that new applications were made during the period covered by this report.

#### *Religious Demography*

About half the population follows traditional indigenous religious practices. Approximately 45 percent of the population are Muslim and about 5 percent are Christian. There are few atheists. The Muslim population is concentrated in the Fula and Mandinka ethnic groups, and Muslims generally live in the north and northeast. Christians are concentrated in Bissau and other large towns. Practitioners of traditional religions inhabit the rest of the country.

Christians belong to a number of groups, including the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. Missionaries from numerous Christian denominations have long been active. Muslims generally adhere to a tolerant "African-style" Islam.

All religions were tolerated prior to the outbreak of civil conflict in June 1998, and there have been no reports of discrimination based on religious belief since that time. Historically, political affiliation has not been related directly to ethnic or religious affiliation. Members of all major faiths are represented in the Interim Government that was inaugurated in February 1999, in the National Assembly, and in the military junta that led the rebellion against President Joao Vieira in 1998.

Numerous foreign missionary groups have long operated in the country without restriction. While many missionaries left following the June 1998 conflict, others stayed and continue to operate unmolested.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. Society is tolerant on religious matters.

There have been no reports of significant ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

There has been no official U.S. presence in country since June 1998. (Note: The U.S. Embassy remains closed following suspension of operations on June 14, 1998 at the outset of civil conflict that ended in May 1999. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar is responsible for U.S. interests in Guinea-Bissau. Sources of information about the situation of religious believers and other circumstances inside Guinea-Bissau are very limited.) The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights during periodic visits to the country by U.S. officials.

## KENYA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, while groups generally were allowed to worship freely, the Government at times interfered with other activities by religious groups.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The Government at times restricted or disrupted public meetings that religious groups organized or participated in, sometimes for political reasons. Muslim leaders charge that the Government is hostile towards Muslims. On August 13, 1999, police shot and killed five unarmed worshipers at a mosque near Mombasa. Police periodically arrested and detained members of the unregistered Mungiki religious group, and on a few occasions used force, including live ammunition in at least one in-

stance, to disrupt Mungiki prayer meetings and politically motivated gatherings. Some members of the Mungiki accuse the Government of harassment, while the Government claims members of the group are involved in illegal practices. There is generally a great level of tolerance among religious groups; however, there were a few instances of violence between Muslim and Christian groups. There are some inter-faith movements and political alliances.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal Policy and Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, while groups generally were allowed to worship freely, the Government at times interfered with other activities by religious groups.

The Government requires new religious organizations to register with the Registrar of Societies, which reports to the Office of the Attorney General. The Government allows traditional indigenous religious organizations to register, although many choose not to do so. Once registered, religious organizations enjoy tax-free status and clergy are not subject to duty on purchased goods. Religious organizations generally receive equal treatment from the Government; however, some small splinter groups have found it difficult to register due to their inability to define their status as more than an offshoot of a larger religious organization. The Government has not granted registration to the Tent of the Living God, a small Kikuyu religious order banned during the single-party era (pre-1992). However, with the arrival of a multiparty system in 1992, the Tent of the Living God has virtually disappeared.

### *Religious Demography*

According to rough estimates, Protestants are the largest religious group representing approximately 38 percent of the population. Approximately 28 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, while an estimated 10 to 20 percent are Muslim. Hinduism is practiced by 1 percent of the population and the remainder follows various traditional indigenous religions or offshoots of Christian religions. There are very few atheists.

Members of most religious groups are active throughout the country. Muslims are concentrated chiefly in the coastal areas and the north and northeastern parts of the country. Muslims are also present in significant numbers in urban centers throughout the country.

Foreign missionary groups of nearly every faith operate in the country. The Government generally has permitted their assistance to the poor and their founding of schools and hospitals. The missionaries openly promote their religious beliefs and have encountered little resistance; however, some missionary groups expressed concern following the release of the report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Devil Worship, in which they were identified as "doorways" into satanism (see following subsection).

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

On July 25, 1999, according to a press report, authorities in Ruaka town ordered members of the small church group, the Word of Mercy Church, to disband, citing "odd practices."

On June 25, 2000, local authorities in Nairobi blocked entry to the Buru Buru Church of God in Nairobi, in an apparent effort to prevent renewed fighting between rival factions in the Church. Fighting between rival factions in the Church 2 weeks earlier led to numerous injuries among worshipers. It is unclear for how long the Church will remain closed.

On April 3, 2000, William Ruto, Assistant Minister in the Office of the President, speaking after the discovery of "cult" killings in Uganda, was quoted as saying that the Government would crack down on religious groups that endanger the safety of their adherents.

Political parties must register with the Government. Despite 1997 reforms and the subsequent registration of a large number of political parties, the Government refused to reverse its 1994 denial of registration of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) on the grounds that the IPK had been involved in a number of violent confrontations with police in 1992.

Muslim leaders have charged that the Government is hostile towards Muslims. Muslims complain that non-Muslims receive better treatment when applying for proof of citizenship. According to Muslim leaders, government authorities more rig-

orously scrutinize the identification cards of persons with Muslim surnames and require them to present additional documentation of their citizenship (i.e., birth certificates of parents and, sometimes, grandparents). The Government has singled out the overwhelmingly Muslim ethnic-Somalis as the only group whose members are required to carry an additional form of identification to prove that they are citizens. They must produce upon demand their Kenyan identification card and a second identification card verifying screening. Both cards also are required in order to apply for a passport. This heightened scrutiny appears to be due to an attempt to deter illegal immigration, rather than to the religious affiliation of the ethnic Somalis. Muslim leaders state that since the August 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, government discrimination against them has worsened.

Purporting to practice witchcraft reportedly is a criminal offense under colonial-era laws; however, persons generally are prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Although many traditional indigenous religions include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it.

In August 1999, the Government presented to Parliament and thereby effectively published the 1994 report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Devil Worship. President Moi appointed the Commission in 1994 in response to public concern, articulated chiefly by Christian clergy, about a perceived resurgence of witchcraft, ritual murders, and other ostensibly "Satanic" practices associated with aspects of traditional indigenous religions. The Commission's widely-publicized report included numerous reports of ritual murder, human sacrifice, and cannibalism, and feats of magic allegedly done by using powers acquired through such acts. It also reported that "Satanists" had infiltrated nonindigenous religious groups including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and the Church of Christ Scientist (Christian Scientists), as well as other organizations, including the Masonic Order (Freemasons) and the Theosophical Society, making them "doorways" to Satanism. Most members of the Commission were senior members of mainline Christian churches; a deputy director of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) also served on the Commission.

In 1998 the Ministry approved radio and television broadcast licenses for a Muslim group and for a Christian group. In March 1999, the Ministry of Information, Transport, and Communication licensed four religious stations: one Islamic station and three Christian stations in the coastal, central, and western regions. These stations have been assigned broadcasting frequencies, and the station of The Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) began undergoing transmission tests in 2000; however, none of the stations had begun to broadcast by mid-2000.

In December 1999, a group of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders formed an alternative process to reform the Constitution, the Ufungamano Initiative, which opposes the Parliament-led process. The Government, although critical of the Ufungamano group, has permitted it to proceed with its constitutional review process. However, a Minister in the Office of the President, Shariff Nassir, and other ruling party politicians, warned of possible confrontation if the Ufungamano Commission attempted to collect citizen views in their constituencies.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

On August 13, 1999, police killed five Muslim worshipers in the Anas Bin Malik mosque in Chai village, near Mombasa. A dozen policemen went to the mosque during a religious ceremony to arrest a man accused of assault. One policeman, Peter Ndirangu, entered the mosque to make the arrest. An altercation ensued and other police officers shot indiscriminately through the windows, killing five persons: imam Mohamed Ali Mwatakucha, Said Ali Mwajefwa, Ali Mohamed Mwadida, Neru Bakari Marika, and Alfian Matano Mwagoga. As the worshipers fled, an unknown person slashed Ndirangu with a farm tool, killing him. The sequence of events remains unclear. Muslim leaders accused police officials of taking two of the victims, whom they believe survived the mosque shooting, to a remote location and killing them. Postmortem studies indicate that at least two of the worshipers died from gunshot wounds to the head, fired from a distance of less than 6 feet. The Government charged two police officers, Julius Mugambi M'Nabere and Stephan Musau Kilonzo, with murder. The case was pending before the court in mid-2000.

Although the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, the Government at times used sections of the Public Order Act and the Penal Code to restrict or disrupt public meetings that religious groups organized or participated in, sometimes for political reasons. On April 3, 2000, police in Laikipia broke up a gathering in a Catholic church hall, on the grounds that the participants were former freedom fighters

holding a secret meeting. The police arrested four men and charged them with holding an illegal meeting.

On September 25, 1999, President Moi was quoted as saying that, for political reasons, he would not allow the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, to enter the country.

The Government historically has been unsympathetic to tribal religious groups that have engendered protest movements. The Government frequently harassed, and periodically arrested and detained members of the Mungiki, a small, controversial, predominately Kikuyu traditional religious group with strong political motivations. On at least one occasion, police fired upon members of the Mungiki while attempting to disrupt their prayer meeting. Members of the Mungiki most commonly are charged with holding illegal assemblies and possessing offensive weapons. On October 10, 1999, a Murang'a court in central Kenya charged eight Mungiki members with taking part in an illegal assembly. The Mungiki had gathered ostensibly to pray at an outdoor shrine. On December 12, 1999, police in Ng'arua, Laikipia district, broke up a meeting of Mungiki members, arrested dozens of persons, and reportedly confiscated two videotapes from a Reuters film crew covering the event. On April 23, 2000, a few hundred members of the Mungiki approached the Nyahururu police station in central Kenya, demanding the release of three members of the group. Police responded with force, including the use of rubber bullets and live ammunition, injuring dozens of persons and sending eight persons to the hospital with gunshot wounds. Police later removed two of the wounded from their hospital beds and detained them, an act that hospital authorities strongly criticized. On May 14, 2000, police in a slum near Nairobi forcibly dispersed a prayer gathering of hundreds of Mungiki members. This police action came 1 week after President Moi criticized the Mungiki and ordered a crackdown on the group during a public speech. On June 25, police shot and injured 5 members of the Mungiki and arrested 23 others while attempting to disrupt a prayer meeting. The members of the Mungiki had responded to the police attempts to disrupt their meeting by throwing stones at the police. The Mungiki group allegedly promotes female genital mutilation (FGM) and the taking of illegal oaths against the Government. The debate over the rights of the Mungiki to practice their traditional religion and advance their political agenda is ongoing. It remains unclear to what extent the Mungiki may have broken the law in practicing their religion.

The Government dropped cattle-rustling charges that it had brought against Francis Tulel, the secretary of the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission for Eldoret Diocese, shortly after arresting him in 1998.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is generally a great level of tolerance among religious groups; however, there were a few instances of violence between adherents of different religions, and Muslims increasingly perceive themselves to be treated as second-class citizens in a predominantly Christian country. Inter-marriage between members of Christian denominations is common and inter-faith prayer services occur frequently. Inter-marriage between Muslims and Christians, although less frequent, is also socially acceptable, and mosques and Christian churches can be found on the same city blocks.

For years Muslims and Christians have held an open debate over their respective places in society. Each group claims to have a larger number of adherents than is plausible, and some Muslim groups believe that the Government and business communities deliberately have impeded development in predominantly Muslim areas. The debate at times has undermined mutual trust. The misuse of authority by mainly Christian security forces in the northeast, which is largely Muslim and in which banditry is widespread, has long contributed to Muslim mistrust. In recent years, the absence of an effective government in southern Somalia, and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) insurgency in southern Ethiopia, have strained Christian-Muslim relations further by causing the Government to increase security force operations in the north and northeast. In these areas, many security force members re-

portedly find it difficult to distinguish Kenyan Muslims from members of Somali militias or the OLF, who are ethnically and culturally similar.

There were a few instances of violence between adherents of different religions. On April 21, 2000, a group of Muslims allegedly threw stones and attacked a group of Catholic worshipers who had stopped in front of the Majengo mosque in Nyeri to pray during a Good Friday ceremony. The Muslim worshipers were in the middle of their Friday prayers and believed that the Catholics were provoking them. A few of the Catholics received minor cuts and bruises. Top leaders of the two faiths met in Nyeri a few days later to reconcile their differences and apologize before the fight escalated. On April 23, 2000, Muslim youths in Kitui reportedly charged and dispersed a group of Christians who were making noise outside a mosque during evening prayers.

During the period covered by this report, there were reports of ritual murders associated with aspects of traditional indigenous religious rites. The victims, generally teenage children, reportedly were killed and parts of their bodies removed for use in traditional rituals by persons seeking renewed youth or health. The Report of the 1994 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Devil Worship, presented to the Parliament in August 1999, contained similar reports from recent years.

Occasionally mobs killed members of their communities on suspicion that they practiced witchcraft.

There have been societal efforts to bridge religious divides. The Inter-Faith Peace Movement represents a broad religious spectrum, and its members include the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims, the Muslim Consultative Council, the Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, the National Council of Churches of Kenya, the Inland African Church, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, and the Hindu Council.

In December 1999, a group of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders formed an alternative process to reform the Constitution, the Ufungamano Initiative, which opposes the Parliament-led process. The Ufungamano Initiative actively seeks input from civil society and others into the reform process.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy made a concerted effort to bridge the gaps that exist between Muslims and Christians. Embassy officials maintain regular contact with leaders and members of all religious communities. The Ambassador and other embassy officers met with Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim leaders while traveling. The Ambassador regularly hosts meetings with religious leaders to discuss issues affecting their communities. In February 2000, the Ambassador and embassy officers traveled to Mombasa to host a public forum at which members of the predominantly Muslim coastal community could meet embassy officials and gain a better understanding of U.S. policy and activities.

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## LESOTHO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no state religion, and no evidence that the government favors any particular religion. However, the majority, if not all, members of the Government are Christians.

The Government does not establish requirements for religious recognition. Generally, there are no benefits from the Government to any religious groups; however, Christians enjoy a waiver of taxes on donations from outside the country. These donations (in the form of clothes, medicines, food, etc) are not subjected to import tax.



### *Religious Demography*

Christianity, specifically Roman Catholicism, is the dominant religion. Approximately 90 percent of the population are Christian, and 70 percent of the Christians are Catholic. Muslims, members of other non-Christian religions, and atheists constitute the remaining 10 percent. Christians are scattered throughout the country, while Muslims are found mainly in the northeastern part of the country.

Many devout Christians still practice their traditional cultural beliefs and rituals along with Christianity. The Catholic Church has fused some aspects of local culture into its services. For example, the singing of hymns during services has taken on a local and traditional way of singing (a repetitive call and response style) in Sesotho—the indigenous language—as well as English. In addition, priests are seen dressed in local dress during services.

There are three main missionary groups, all Christian, active in the country: Catholics, Protestants, and Anglicans. They do not face any special requirements or restrictions.

Catholic predominance in Lesotho derives from the successful establishment of schools in the last century and their influence over education policy. The Catholic Church owns about 75 percent of all primary and secondary schools in the country as well as having been instrumental in establishing the National University.

The Catholic Church helped found the Basotholand National Party (BNP) in 1959 and sponsored it in the independence elections in 1966. Most members of the BNP are practicing Catholics. The BNP ruled the country from independence in 1966 until 1985 when it was overthrown in a military coup. The then-opposition Basotholand Congress Party (BCP) always has been aligned with the Protestants, e.g., evangelicals. Politically persecuted and segregated through the years, the members of the BCP remained Protestant. They were forced into exile in 1973 after being denied their victory in the 1970 elections.

There is no government program aimed at promoting inter-faith understanding.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is generally mutual understanding and cooperation between Christians and Muslims. There are efforts within the ecumenical community to promote tolerance and cooperation on social issues.

However, the dominance of Christians in the population at times adversely affected other religions. For example, a Catholic-based local newspaper ran an editorial campaign against Islam in mid-1998. The steady increase of Muslim schools, which threatened Catholic dominance in the education sector, prompted this anti-Islamic feeling.

In addition, most practitioners of Islam are of Asian origin, while the majority of Christians are the indigenous Basotho. Conservative and xenophobic tendencies often surface when there is a conflict between the two groups. For example, civil unrest and riots normally target persons of Asian descent but generally not for religious motives. During the August to September 1998 civil unrest, opposing political parties, which are divided along religious lines as well, clashed, and there were accusations of involvement by religious groups in the crisis.

There are serious theological and doctrinal differences among the Christians. The main feud is between the Catholics and the Protestants, especially evangelical, charismatic, and Mormon groups. However, there have been no specific incidents or confrontations during the period of this report.

Catholics form the largest group in the major political party and tend to be more affluent. Their influence is strong because of their easy access to resources. On the other hand, Protestants are in the minority and generally poor despite the fact that they were the pioneers of Christianity in Lesotho.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## LIBERIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Societal discrimination against Muslims is a problem. In addition, there continues to be ethnic tension along religious lines between Muslim and non-Muslim groups, particularly between the Lormas and the Mandingos. This tension was exacerbated by government inaction. This inaction is motivated primarily by the fact that most Muslims were allied with factions that opposed President Charles Taylor during the recent civil war and still belong to opposition parties, rather than by religious discrimination. In March 2000, the Government temporarily suspended broadcasting by a Catholic radio station to ensure that it confined itself to "purely religious matters."

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions.

There is no established state religion. However, government ceremonies invariably open and close with prayer and may include hymn singing. The prayers and hymns are usually Christian but occasionally are Muslim.

All organizations, including religious groups, must register their articles of incorporation with the Government, along with a statement of the purpose of the organization. However, traditional indigenous religious groups generally need not and do not register. The registration is routine, and there have been no reports that the registration process is either burdensome or discriminatory in its administration.

#### *Religious Demography*

Although Islam is gaining adherents, as much as 40 percent of the population practice either Christianity or elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions. About 20 percent of the population practice Islam. The remaining 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively. The Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and AME Zion denominations, as well as several Pentecostal churches are represented in the Christian community. Some of the Pentecostal movements are independent, while others are affiliated with churches in the United States and elsewhere. There is also a small Baha'i community.

Christianity, traditional indigenous religions, and syncretistic religions combining elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions are found throughout the country. Islam is prevalent only among members of the Mandingo ethnic group, who are concentrated in the northern and eastern counties, and among the Vai ethnic group in the northwest.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Although the law prohibits religious discrimination, Islamic leaders complained of discrimination against Muslims. Although there are some Muslims in senior government positions, many Muslims believe that they are bypassed for desirable jobs. Many Muslim business proprietors believe that the Taylor Government's decision to enforce an old statute prohibiting business on Sunday discriminates against them. Most Mandingos and hence most Muslims were allied with factions that opposed Taylor during the recent civil war and still belong to opposition parties.

Two FM radio stations, one operated by the Roman Catholic archdiocese, the other an evangelical station, broadcast Christian-oriented religious programming from Monrovia to the capital and the surrounding area. There are no Islamic-oriented radio stations in the country, and little radio broadcasting of any kind in the northern and eastern counties where the Islamic population is concentrated. In March 2000, the Government suspended the Catholic radio station's broadcasts pending assurances that the station would confine itself to "purely religious matters." The station was reopened a short time later, resuming its previous broadcast programming. The closure was believed to be politically motivated and not a case of religious discrimination.

In February 2000, a Muslim activist was ordered arrested on charges of treason after he called on Muslims to quit their government jobs in protest of the Govern-

ment's inaction since the burning of five mosques in Lofa County in January 2000 (see Section II). The activist went into hiding and his whereabouts are unknown. While the Government has not taken actions openly against Muslims, its inaction over reports of abuses in Lofa County contributed to ethnic tension between Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic groups in that area of the country.

There was no report released by the Government following its November 1999 investigation of the reported killing of as many as 30 Muslim Mandingos in Lofa County in August 1999. Although the authorities subsequently arrested 19 persons, they did not charge anyone with a crime. Mandingo residents of Lofa County continued to be afraid to return to their homes.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Some tensions exist between the major religious communities. The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, Islamic leaders complained of societal discrimination against Muslims. The private sector in urban areas, particularly in the capital, gives preference to Christianity in civic ceremonies and observances, and discrimination against followers of other organized religions spills over into areas of individual opportunity and employment. There is an inter-faith council that brings together leaders of the Christian and Islamic faiths.

Ethnic tensions continued in Lofa County between the predominantly Muslim Mandingo ethnic group and the Lorma ethnic group. In January 2000, five mosques were burned down. There was no report of a governmental investigation or action taken against the arsonists (see Section I).

Ritual killings, in which body parts used in traditional indigenous rituals are removed from the victim, continue to occur. The number of such killings is difficult to ascertain, since police often describe deaths as accidents even when body parts have been removed. Deaths that appear to be natural or accidental sometimes are rumored to be the work of ritual killers. Little reliable information appears to be readily available about traditions associated with ritual killings. It is believed that practitioners of traditional indigenous religions among the Grebo and Krahn ethnic groups concentrated in the southeastern counties most commonly engage in ritual killings. The victims are usually members of the religious group performing the ritual. Body parts of a member whom the group believes to be powerful are believed to be the most effective ritually. Body parts most frequently removed include the heart, liver, and genitals. The rituals involved have been reported in some cases to entail eating body parts, and the underlying religious beliefs may be related to incidents during the civil war in which faction leaders sometimes ate (and in which one faction leader had himself filmed eating) body parts of former leaders of rival factions. Removal of body parts for use in traditional rituals is believed to be the motive for ritual killings, rather than an abuse incidental to killings committed for other motives. Ritual murders for the purpose of obtaining body parts traditionally were committed by religious group members called "heart men," but since the civil war, common criminals inured to killing also may sell body parts.

In August 1999, the Government sent a high-level delegation of the National Police to the southeastern counties to investigate reports of ritual killings. There were no reports released from this investigation.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy monitors developments affecting religious freedom, maintains contact with clergy and other leaders of major religious communities, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officers have met on various occasions with the Roman Catholic Archbishop, the United Methodist Bishop, the AME Bishop, the AME Zion Bishop, the Inter-faith Council, the National Repentant Muslims, and other religious leaders during the period covered by this report.

## MADAGASCAR

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Religious groups must register and obtain authorization from the Ministry of Interior. In January 1998, an organization widely perceived to be affiliated with the Reverend Sun Myung Moon was refused registration, apparently due to concerns about its use of mind-control practices. There is no indication that the organization has reapplied for registration, nor that the Government has changed its decision.

#### *Religious Demography*

Most of the population of roughly 15 million persons is nominally Christian, of which an estimated 4.5 million are Roman Catholics, 3.5 million are Protestants belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (mostly from Fianarantsoa North), 2 million are Lutherans (mostly from Fianarantsoa South), and less than 1 million are Anglicans (mostly in Antananarivo and Toamasina). Most other citizens are followers of traditional indigenous beliefs centered on ancestor worship. Muslims constitute probably slightly less than an estimated 10 percent of the population (concentrated in the north and northwest); they include ethnic Malagasy as well as most of the ethnic Indians who immigrated within the past hundred years. There are a few Hindus among the Indians.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely, including Catholics, Protestants of various denominations, and Mormons.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious communities are generally amicable. Some ethnic Malagasy voice resentment against the ethnic Indian community, but this is primarily due to perceptions that the relative prosperity of the ethnic Indian community is due to the corruption of government officials and the economic exploitation of ethnic Malagasy customers. There were no reports of violence or looting directed against members of the ethnic Indian community during the period covered by this report.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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## MALAWI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There are no separate requirements for recognition of different religions, but religious groups must register with the Government. There were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious groups.

### *Religious Demography*

More than 70 percent of the population are Christian. Among the Christian denominations, the largest are the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian—CCAP) Churches, with smaller numbers of Anglicans, Baptists, evangelicals, and Seventh-Day Adventists. There is a substantial Muslim minority totaling approximately 20 percent of the population. Most Muslims are Sunni. There are also Hindus, Baha'is, and followers of traditional indigenous religions. Atheism is negligible.

Foreign missionaries experienced occasional delays in renewing employment permits, despite the Government's revision of its policy and procedures on temporary employment permits in 1997; however, this appeared to be the result of bureaucratic inefficiency rather than a deliberate government policy against foreign missionaries. Missionaries and charitable workers pay lower fees for employment permits than do other professionals.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities. There is no societal discrimination against members of religious minorities.

There have been active efforts to foster cooperation between religious groups. For example, the Public Affairs Committee, which is involved prominently in promoting civic education and human rights, includes representatives of various churches and mosques.

Some opposition politicians and clerics have raised Islam as a political issue. Citing the President's adherence to Islam, his contact with Islamic countries such as Libya and Sudan, and the building of new mosques, some opposition politicians and clerics have accused the ruling party of attempting to "Islamicize" the country. An attempt by the Government in early 2000 to replace "bible knowledge" in the school curriculum with the more universal "moral and religious education" course has met with widespread criticism from Christian leaders. When the President suspended the introduction of the new curriculum and returned "bible knowledge" to the curriculum, Muslim leaders rebuked him. In an isolated incident in April 2000, Muslims and Christians clashed over the efforts of an evangelical preacher to promote an audiotape comparing the Bible and the Koran. Muslims find the tape provocative and blasphemous, and the issue remains an open point of contention between followers of the two religions.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Representatives of the Embassy have frequent contact with leaders and members of all religious communities in the country.

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## MALI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between the Muslim majority and Christian and other religious minorities are generally amicable.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The law allows for religious practices that do not pose a threat to social stability and peace. The Constitution declares the country a secular state. Family law, including laws surrounding divorce, marriage, and inheritance, are based on a mixture of local tradition and Islamic law and practice.

The Government requires that all public associations, including religious associations, register with the Government. However, registration confers no tax preference and no other legal benefits, and failure to register is not penalized in practice. The registration process is routine and is not burdensome. Traditional indigenous religions are not required to register.

The Minister of Territorial Administration and Collectives can prohibit religious publications that he concludes defame another religion, but there were no reports of instances in which publications were prohibited.

#### *Religious Demography*

Muslims make up about 90 percent of the population, and the vast majority of Muslims are Sunni. About 5 percent of the population are Christian, and the Christian community is about evenly split between Catholic and Protestant denominations. Most of the remainder of the population practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Atheism or agnosticism is rare. Most immigrants are from neighboring countries and either practice the majority Muslim faith or belong to a Christian group.

There are no geographic concentrations or segregation of religious groups. Christian communities tend to be located in and around urban areas, because of the work of urban based missionaries. However, Christians are found throughout the country. Animists also practice throughout the country, but are most active in rural areas. The vast majority of citizens practice their religion daily. Islam is tolerant and adapted to local conditions. Women participate in economic and political activity, engage in social interaction, and do not wear veils.

Persons are free to change their religion. Foreign missionary groups operate in the country, and Muslims and non-Muslims may proselytize freely. Most known foreign missionary groups are Christian groups, which are based in Europe and are engaged in development work. However, they do not link the benefits of their development activities to conversion. A number of U.S.-based Christian missionary groups also operate in the country.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the Muslim majority and the Christian and other religious minorities—including practitioners of traditional indigenous religions—are generally amicable. Adherents of a variety of faiths may be found within the same families. Many followers of one religion attend religious ceremonies of other religions, especially weddings and funerals. Non-Muslim missionary communities live and work in the country without difficulty. Christian missionaries, especially the rural-based development workers, enjoy good relations within their communities.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officers meet regularly with religious authorities and government officials in ministries dealing with these issues. During a civil society meeting hosted by the Embassy, Catholic, Protestant, Sunni, and Shi'a leaders were invited to join secular leaders and traditional religious authorities in an open discussion on issues important to society. The Embassy maintains contacts with the foreign missionary community, and monitors the situation for indications that religious freedom may be threatened by the Government or societal pressures. Embassy officers have raised the issue of religious freedom through public diplomacy programs.

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**MAURITANIA**

The Constitution establishes Mauritania as an Islamic republic and decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the State; accordingly, the Government limits freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between the Muslim community and the small Christian community are generally amicable.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution establishes Mauritania as an Islamic republic and decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the State; accordingly, the Government limits freedom of religion.

Both the Government and society generally consider Islam to be the essential cohesive element unifying the country's various ethnic groups and castes. There is a cabinet-level Ministry of Culture and Islamic Orientation and a High Council of Islam consisting of six imams which, at the Government's request, advises on the conformance of legislation to Islamic precepts.

Although the Government provides a small stipend to the imam of the Central Mosque in the capital city of Nouakchott, mosques and Koranic schools normally are supported by their members and other donors.

There is no religious oath required of government employees or members of the ruling political party, except for the President and the members of the 5-person Constitutional Council and the 10-person High Council of Magistrates presided over by the President. The Constitutional Council and the High Council of Magistrates advise the President in matters of law and the Constitution. The oath of office includes a promise to God to uphold the law of the land in conformity with Islamic precepts.

The Government does not register religious groups. However, secular nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) must register with the Ministry of the Interior; this includes humanitarian and development NGO's affiliated with religious groups. Nonprofit organizations, including both religious groups and secular NGO's, generally are not subject to taxation.

*Religious Demography*

Nearly 100 percent of the population are Sunni Muslims, who are prohibited by their religion from converting to another religion.

There is a small number of Christians, and Christian churches have been established in Nouakchott, Atar, Zouerate, Nouadhibou, and Rosso.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Shari'a (Islamic law), proclaimed the law of the land under a previous government in 1983, includes the Koranic prohibition against apostasy; however, it has never been codified in civil law or enforced. The small number of known converts from Islam suffered no social ostracism, and there were no reports of societal or governmental attempts to punish them.

Although there is no specific legal prohibition against proselytizing by non-Muslims, in practice the Government implements the prohibition against proselytizing by non-Muslims through the use of Article 11 of the Press Act, which bans the pub-

lication of any material that is against Islam or contradicts or otherwise threatens Islam. The Government views any attempts by Christians to convert Muslims as undermining society. Foreign Christian NGO's limit their activities to humanitarian and development assistance.

Christians in the foreign community and the few Christian citizens practice their religion openly and freely. Under Article 11 of the Press Law, the Government may restrict the importation, printing, or public distribution of Bibles or other non-Islamic religious literature, and in practice Bibles are neither printed nor publicly sold in the country. However, the possession of Bibles and other Christian religious materials in private homes is not illegal, and there appears to be no shortage of Bibles and other religious publications among the small Christian community.

A magistrate of Shari'a, who heads a separate government commission, decides the dates for observing religious holidays and addresses the nation on these holidays.

Both privately run Koranic schools which, nearly all children attend, and the public schools include classes on religion. These classes teach both the history and principles of Islam and the classical Arabic of the Koran. Although attendance of these religion classes is ostensibly required, many students, the great majority of whom are Muslims, decline to attend these classes for diverse ethno-linguistic and religious reasons. They are nevertheless able to advance in school and ultimately to graduate with diplomas, provided that they compensate for their failure to attend the required religion classes by their performance in other classes.

There are several foreign, Christian NGO's active in humanitarian and developmental work in the country. They practice their religion openly, but respect the prescription against proselytizing.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the Muslim community and the small Christian community are generally amicable. There were no incidents of attacks or threats of attacks on the basis of religion. In previous years, the Government responded quickly and effectively to incidents involving an attack by an Islamic extremist on Catholic priests and a threat made against a Christian NGO.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy monitors developments affecting religious freedom, maintains contact with clergy and other leaders of major religious groups, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

The Ambassador discussed the importance of religious tolerance with the Minister of Interior on January 18 and 29, 2000.

The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission have discussed issues of religious freedom with representatives of American Christian NGO's working in country.

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## MAURITIUS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Tensions between the Hindu majority and Christian Creole and Muslim minorities persist; however, members of each group worshipped without hindrance.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.



## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Religious organizations and faiths that were present in the country prior to independence, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church, the Seventh-Day Adventists, Hindus, and Muslims, are recognized in a parliamentary decree. These groups also receive a lump-sum payment every year from the Ministry of Finance based upon the number of adherents, as determined by a 10-year census. Newer religious organizations (which must have a minimum of 7 members) are registered by the Registrar of Associations and are recognized as a legal entity with tax-free privileges. No groups are known to have been refused registration.

*Religious Demography*

In the 1990 census, out of a population of more than 1 million persons, approximately 50 percent claimed to be Hindu, 32 percent Christian, 16 percent Muslim, and less than 1 percent Baha'i, Jewish, or Buddhist. Also less than 1 percent claimed to be atheists or agnostics. There are no figures for those who actually practice their faith, but there are estimates that the figure is around 60 percent for all religious groups.

Approximately 85 percent of Christians are Roman Catholic. The remaining 15 percent are members of the following churches: Adventist, Assembly of God, Christian Tamil, Church of England, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Sunni Muslims account for over 90 percent of the Muslims; however, there are some Shi'a Muslims.

Many Buddhists are also practicing Catholics, since many citizens of Chinese ancestry have sent, and continue to send, their children to the Loreto Convent primary schools located in the major towns.

The north tends to be more Hindu and the south is more Catholic. There are also large populations of Hindus and Catholics in the main cities from the capital of Port Louis to the central cities of Quatre Bornes and Curepipe, and most Muslims and Christian churches are concentrated in these areas. The offshore island of Rodrigues, with a population of 35,200, is predominantly Catholic.

While the Government is secular in both name and practice, for political reasons it has in the past favored the Hindu majority of the population with greater access to government patronage.

Foreign missionary groups are allowed to operate on a case-by-case basis. There are no government regulations detailing the conditions of their presence or limiting their proselytizing activities. Groups must obtain both a visa and a work permit for each missionary. Foreign missionaries sometimes are prohibited from residing in the country beyond 5 years (which would permit them to seek Mauritian citizenship), but religious organizations are permitted to send new missionaries to replace them.

While some Creole political groups alleged that Christian Creoles received unjust treatment from the police, there was no evidence that this was based in particular on religious differences. Such incidents likely were largely a result of the Creoles' position as the country's underclass, as well as ethnic differences, since the police force is predominantly Indo-Mauritian.

In the wake of riots that broke out in February 1999 partly as a result of ethnic tensions, religious leaders called on the President to form an interreligious council. The President formed the Committee for the Promotion of National Unity, which consists of 20 members from a wide cross-section of the public and private sectors. The committee has sponsored a variety of activities to promote goodwill between ethnic groups.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow minor U.S. citizens who had been forced to convert their religion to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Tensions between the Hindu majority and Christian Creole and Muslim minorities persist; however, no violent confrontations resulted during the period covered by this report.

Mauritius is a small island nation, and ethnic groups, known as “communities,” are quite tightly knit. Inter-marriage is relatively rare. An individual’s name easily identifies his or her ethnic and religious background. There is a strong correlation between religious affiliation and ethnicity. Citizens of Indian ethnicity are usually Hindus or Muslims. Citizens of Chinese ancestry usually practice both Buddhism and Catholicism. Creoles and citizens of European-descent are usually Catholic. However, there is a growing number of Hindu converts to evangelical Christian churches, a fact that is of growing concern to Hindu organizations.

In the wake of violent confrontations in early 1999 that were partially the result of ethnic tensions, the Mauritian Council of Social Service, which serves as an umbrella group for nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s) in the country, created a conflict resolution working group to address ethnic tensions. A citizen based abroad established the Mauritius Peace Initiative to facilitate contact between domestic community leaders and international conflict resolution experts.

Some minorities, usually Creoles and Muslims, allege that a glass ceiling exists within the upper echelons of the civil service that prevents them from reaching the highest levels.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Support for some conflict resolution activities was provided under the U.S. Democracy and Human Rights Fund.

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**MOZAMBIQUE**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. However, the Constitution bans religious denomination-based political parties as threats to national unity.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides that all citizens have the freedom to practice or not to practice a religion and gives religious denominations the right to pursue their religious aims freely, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice.

The 1989 Law on Religious Freedom requires religious institutions and missionary organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice, reveal their principal source of funds and provide the names of at least 500 followers in good standing. No particular benefits or privileges are associated with the registration process.

In late 1998, there was disagreement in the National Assembly over declaring Muslim holy days as official holidays, an issue that surfaces periodically. Muslim holidays shift with lunar cycles, complicating their calendar placement. The issue was resolved in practice when the Government instructed employers to grant liberal leave to both Christian and Muslim employees to observe their respective religious holidays, in addition to scheduled national holidays.

*Religious Demography*

According to the National Institute of Statistics, half of the population of 16 to 17 million does not profess to practice a religion or creed. However, scholars at local universities assert that virtually all persons recognize or practice some form of animism or traditional indigenous religions. Of the approximately 8 million persons who do profess a recognized religion, 24 percent are Roman Catholic, 22 percent are Protestant, and 20 percent are Muslim. Many Muslim clerics disagree with this statistic, claiming that Islam is the country’s majority religion. Religious communities are dispersed throughout the country. The northern provinces and the coastal strip

are most strongly Muslim, Catholics predominate in the central provinces, and Protestants are most numerous in the southern region. Government sources note that evangelical Christians represent the fastest growing religious group, with the number of young adherents under age 35 increasing rapidly.

There are 394 distinct denominations of religions registered with the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. Among Muslims, only a generic "Islamic" community (Sunni) and the Ismaili community are registered. Among Christians, the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Greek Orthodox Churches are registered along with Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Seventh-Day Adventist, Mormon, Nazarene, and Jehovah's Witnesses groups, as well as scores of evangelical, apostolic, and Pentecostal churches. Jewish, Hindu, and Baha'i communities also are registered, and constitute small minorities. Many citizens consider the Baha'i Faith to be a "new religion." Many of these communities draw members from across ethnic, political, and racial lines.

Traditional indigenous practices and rituals are present in most Christian churches, including Catholic churches, and in most Muslim worship. For example, members of these faiths commonly travel to the graves of ancestors to say special prayers for rain. Similarly, Christians and Muslims continue to practice a ritual of preparation or inauguration at the time of important events, e.g. a first job, a school examination, a swearing-in, etc., by offering prayers and spilling beverages on the ground to please ancestors. Some Christians and Muslims consult "curandeiros," traditional healers or spiritualists—some of whom are themselves nominal Christians or Muslims—in search of good luck, healing, and solutions to problems.

The Government routinely grants visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries. Dozens of foreign missionary and evangelical groups operate freely in the country, representing numerous Protestant denominations along with the Summer Institute of Languages Bible Translators and the Tabligh Islamic Call Mission. Muslim missionaries from South Africa have established Islamic schools (madrassas) in many cities and towns of the northern provinces.

The Constitution gives religious groups the right to own and acquire assets, and these institutions are allowed by law to own and operate schools. Religious instruction in public schools is strictly prohibited.

While virtually all places of worship nationalized by the State in 1977 have been returned to the respective religious organizations, the Catholic Church and certain Muslim communities complained that some other properties such as schools, health centers, and residences unjustly remained in state hands, and continued to press for the return of such properties. Government sources stated that the majority of property was returned, with a few cases still being examined on an individual basis, including two properties in Maputo. In 1982 the Ministry of Justice founded the Directorate for Religious Affairs to address the issue of the return of church properties. Provincial governments have the final responsibility for establishing a process for property restoration. The return of church property is perhaps most problematic when the facility is currently in use as a public school, health clinic, or police station, as funds for construction of new facilities are in short supply.

A conference of bishops, including Catholic and Anglican members, meets regularly and consults with the President of the Republic.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The law governing political parties specifically forbids religious parties from organizing, and any party from sponsoring religious propaganda. In late 1998, the Independent Party of Mozambique (PIMO), a predominantly Muslim group without representation in Parliament, began arguing for the right of political parties to base their activities on religious principles. The Government so far has tolerated PIMO's activities, although it has criticized the group. PIMO and some members of the legislature argued that the Movimento Islamico, a parliamentary caucus of Muslims from the ruling Frelimo party, was itself tantamount to a religious party.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

In February 1999, police detained a Pakistani imam for questioning in connection with the criminal investigation of the murder and decapitation of a young black man. The imam was arrested, released, and later taken back into custody. The widely reported case went to the Supreme Court, which released the imam in January 2000, clearing him of the charges. He has since departed the country. Two men accused of perpetrating the murder remain in prison.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among communities of different faiths are generally amicable, especially at the grassroots level. The black and Indian Islamic communities tend to remain separate; however, there were no reports of conflict.

The 3-year-old Forum of Religions, an organization for social and disaster relief composed of members of the Christian Council of Mozambique, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Muslim, Baha'i, and Jewish communities is an example of inter-faith cooperation. The goal of the forum is to offer collective assistance to the needy, without regard to creed. In response to disastrous flooding in February and March 2000, numerous religious communities jointly contributed to flood relief efforts. Religiously based charities were active in flood relief activities, providing monetary donations, food, and clothing.

In early 2000, civil society and the media highlighted religious aspects of draft Family Law legislation. Debate focused on the need for legal recognition of religious and common law marriages, as only civil marriages are legal at present. Under the proposed law, polygamous marriages would not be recognized, although the law would offer protection to the widows and children of polygamous unions. Several leaders within the Islamic community oppose the proposal for not recognizing polygamy. On the other hand, approximately 50 Muslim women staged a public protest against polygamy in early May 2000. Some Islamic groups oppose a section of the law that would raise the legal age of marriage to 16 for both men and women. However, several Christian religious groups have proposed higher minimum ages for marriage, such as 18 or even 20 years of age.

There have recently been allegations of misconduct within the Anglican Church. According to press reports in April 2000, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Niassa was investigated by the Church for diverting roughly \$30,000 (500 million Meticaïs). Detractors also have accused the Anglican Church of practicing tribal favoritism in appointing church leaders.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Embassy staff seeks contact with religious groups of all faiths. During an embassy field mission to Beira, the second largest city, the Ambassador met with eight leaders of the Muslim community to discuss various issues. The Ambassador acted as mediator in a case where an American missionary distributed religious tracts inside a mosque during Ramadan. The imam of the mosque threatened a lawsuit against the missionary for trespassing; the Ambassador was able to intercede and defuse the situation. No charges were filed against the missionary, who was free to continue his distribution of religious materials outside of the mosque.

During the period covered by this report, the Ambassador met periodically with Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic leaders. The Embassy also has frequent contact with National Assembly deputies of various religious faiths.

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**NAMIBIA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There is no state religion, nor does the State subsidize any particular denomination.

The Government does not formally recognize any religion. There are no registration requirements for religious organizations.

*Religious Demography*

A vast majority of citizens—over 90 percent—identify themselves as Christian. The two largest denominations are the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches, although there are also smaller numbers of Baptists, Methodists, and Mormons. The Himba, an ethnic group that constitutes less than 1 percent of the population, practice a traditional religion oriented toward their natural environment in the desert northwest. Other non-Christian denominations include the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Baha'i faiths. Practitioners of these religions are predominantly immigrants, descendants of immigrants, or converted after recent proselytizing. They reside primarily in urban areas.

Some foreign missionaries have complained about the difficulty of obtaining work and residency permits. However, the difficulty that religious workers experience in obtaining work and residency permits is a bureaucratic impediment that faces all foreign nationals.

The Government does not have specific programs to promote inter-faith understanding.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the many religious communities are amicable.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy has sought to convince the Government on a number of occasions to revise its policy on granting residence and work permits for foreign nationals, including both religious and lay workers. Embassy staff members have frequent contact with citizens and foreign visitors from a wide variety of religious faiths.

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**NIGER**

The July 1999 Constitution provides for “the right of the free development of each individual in their spiritual, cultural, and religious dimensions,” and the Government supports the freedom to practice one’s religious beliefs, as long as persons respect public order, social peace, and national unity.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities, but there have been instances when members of the majority religion (Islam) have not been tolerant of the rights of members of minority religions to practice their faith.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The July 1999 Constitution provides for “the right of the free development of each individual in their spiritual, cultural, and religious dimensions,” and the Govern-

ment supports the freedom to practice one's religious beliefs, as long as persons respect public order, social peace, and national unity.

Religious organizations must register with the Interior Ministry. This registration is a formality, and there is no evidence that it has ever been denied.

#### *Religious Demography*

Islam is the dominant religion and is practiced by over 90 percent of the population. Christians (including Jehovah's Witnesses) and Baha'is practice freely. Islam is dominant throughout the country. The cities of Say, Kiota, Agadez, and Madarounfa are considered holy by the local Islamic communities, and the practice of other religions in those cities is not as well tolerated as in other areas. Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, account for less than 5 percent of the population and are particularly active in Niamey and other urban centers with expatriate populations. As Christianity was the religion of French colonial institutions, its followers include many local believers from the educated, the elite, and the colonial families, as well as Africans from neighboring coastal countries, particularly Benin, Togo, and Ghana. There is a Christian community in Galmi, in the Tahoua Department, which houses a hospital and health center run by Society for International Missions (SIM) missionaries and has been in operation for over 40 years. The Baha'is are very active and represent a small percentage of the population (in the thousands). They are located primarily in Niamey and in communities on the west side of the Niger River, bordering Burkina Faso. Followers of the Baha'i faith have sponsored religious tolerance campaigns and have had press coverage of some of their activities. A small percentage of the population practice traditional indigenous religions.

Christmas and Easter, along with Muslim holy days, are recognized national holidays. No religious group is subsidized officially to conduct its activities, although the Islamic Association has a weekly broadcast on the government-owned (and the only) television station. Christian programming generally is broadcast only on special occasions like Christmas.

The State must authorize construction of any place of worship.

Foreign missionaries work freely, but their organizations must be registered officially as associations.

Active Christian missionary organizations include Southern Baptist, Evangelical Baptist, Catholic, Assemblies of God, Seventh-Day Adventist, SIM, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Beyond proselytizing, most missionary groups generally offer development assistance as well.

There were instances during the period covered by this report in which local police were not confident that they could ensure the safety of foreign missionaries, and local authorities ordered the closure of a church in Niamey but did not enforce it (see Section II).

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities, but there have been instances when members of the majority religion (Islam) have not been tolerant of the rights of members of minority religions to practice their faith.

Starting in 1998, Southern Baptist missionaries in Say faced harassment by members of the majority Islamic community. When the missionaries notified the authorities, they were told that, while it was within their rights to be there, the local police could not ensure their safety.

The harassment continued through September 1999, when the missionaries decided to leave the area for a new location. One family has relocated to Gotheye, and the other one continues its missionary activities in the region but no longer lives in Say. However, local Christians remain in Say.

On May 14, 2000, the same members of the local Islamic community in Say threatened to burn down the meeting place of the local Christians who remained. Leaders of the same organization also threatened to beat or have arrested a local Christian man in the village of Ouro Sidi because he continued to work with the Southern Baptists. There were no reports that such threats were carried out.

Just after the April 1999 coup, the Assemblies of God church in the capital, Niamey, was notified by the mayor's office that it had to close until the "new order" was established, (presumably until a democratically elected government is in place,

in early 2000). The church has been in its location since 1996 and has had an ongoing problem with one of its neighbors, another Christian group who had been trying actively to have the church closed since its establishment. The Assemblies of God church remains open, and no further action was ever taken on the case.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy regularly emphasizes the importance of a spirit of tolerance in its public statements and in meetings with government officials and members of civil society.

The Embassy maintains good relationships with minority religious groups, most of which are long-term resident missionaries and well-known members of the American community. Embassy personnel also have contact with the Catholic mission, the Baha'i community, and Islamic organizations.

Embassy officers on August 31, 1999, met with the Interior Minister to discuss the situation of the missionaries in Say and on September 15, 1999, met with the Secretary General of the Interior Ministry. Following the report of a new threat, an embassy officer on May 18, 2000, met with the director of political and judicial affairs at the Interior Ministry and raised embassy concerns about the renewed threats to Christians in the Say region. The director replied that such incidents could not be tolerated in a secular state and promised to look into it.

## NIGERIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance; however, the Government restricted these rights in practice in certain respects.

The status of respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the year due to the implementation of an expanded version of Shari'a law in several northern states, which challenged constitutional protections for religious freedom and sparked inter-religious violence. The Constitution prohibits state and local governments from adopting an official religion; however, it also provides that states may elect to use Islamic (Shari'a) customary law and courts.

Government discrimination based on religion and societal tension between different religious groups continued. Although Christians were exempt from the law, the societal ramifications of expanded Shari'a law infringed upon the rights of non-Muslims in the north to live in a society governed by secular laws. Plans to implement expanded Shari'a laws in Kaduna state, which has a large Christian population, sparked violence in February 2000 that lasted for several days and resulted in an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 deaths. Reprisal attacks followed in the predominantly Christian southeastern towns of Aba, Owerri, and Onitsha, resulting in an additional 500 deaths. The violence, although initiated in a religious context, had strong ethnic undertones and was the worst the country had experienced since the civil war of 1967-1970. The violence led several state governments to restrict public preaching, religious processions, and meetings. The national turmoil surrounding the Shari'a issue abated by mid-2000, but the issue was not resolved completely by June 30, 2000.

U.S. Embassy officials frequently discuss the political and social situation with various religious leaders, who play a prominent role in civil society and in the human rights community. Embassy officers raised religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of the embassy's overall efforts to promote respect for human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance; however, the Government restricted these rights in practice in certain respects.

The Constitution prohibits state and local Governments from adopting an official religion; however, it also provides that states may elect to use Islamic (Shari'a) customary law and courts. There are 36 states in the country; governors have autonomy in decision-making but derive their resources from the federal government. Since independence, the jurisdiction of Shari'a courts has been limited to family or

personal law cases involving Muslims, or to civil disputes between Muslims who consent to the courts' jurisdiction. However, the Constitution states that a Shari'a court of appeal may exercise "such other jurisdiction as may be conferred upon it by the law of the State." Some states have interpreted this language as granting them the right to expand the jurisdiction of existing Shari'a courts to include criminal matters. Several Christians have alleged that, with the adoption of an expanded Shari'a law in several states and the continued use of state funds to fund the construction of mosques, teaching of Alkalis (Muslim judges), and pilgrimages to Mecca (Hajj), Islam has been adopted as the de facto state religion of several northern states. However, state funds also are used to fund Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. In general states with a clear Christian or Muslim majority explicitly favor the majority faith. The Constitution also provides that the federal Government is to establish a Federal Shari'a Court of Appeal and Final Court of Appeal; however, the Government had not yet established such courts by the end of the period covered by this report.

On October 8, 1999, the governor of Zamfara state, Ahmed Sani, signed a bill establishing Shari'a courts and courts of appeal in Zamfara state, and another bill that constitutes the Shari'a penal code; the bills took effect on January 27, 2000. Zamfara's law adopted traditional Shari'a in its entirety, with the exception that apostasy was not criminalized. Other Muslim communities, particularly from the states of Kano, Niger, Sokoto, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, and Katsina states, began to echo the call for Shari'a in their states. At the end of the period covered by this report, four northern states had adopted variations of Shari'a law—Zamfara, Kano, Niger, and Sokoto. In May 2000, an international human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO), Huri-Laws, took the Zamfara state government to court, challenging the constitutionality of Zamfara's expanded Shari'a penal code. The case was ongoing as of June 30, 2000.

Following violence in relation to the expansion of Shari'a laws in Kaduna in February 2000, several northern state governments banned any type of proselytizing, in spite of the fact that it is permitted by the Constitution.

#### *Religious Demography*

About half of the country's population practice Islam, about 40 percent practice Christianity, and about 10 percent practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion; many persons practice both elements of Christianity or Islam and elements of a traditional indigenous religion. The predominant form of Islam in the country is Sunni. The Christian population includes Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, and a growing number of followers of evangelical Pentecostal groups. Catholics constitute the largest Christian denomination. There is some correlation between religious differences and ethnic and regional differences. The north, which is dominated by the large Hausa and Fulani (Peuhl) ethnic groups, is predominantly Muslim, with significant populations of Christians in urban centers, particularly in Kaduna and Jos. In the southwest, where the large Yoruba ethnic group is dominant, there is no dominant religion; Islam is practiced in a plurality, but probably not a majority, of the largest cities of the region, due in part to Hausa and Fulani communities in those regions. Many Yorubas practice Islam, many practice Christianity, and many continue to practice the traditional Yoruba religion, which includes both a belief in a single supreme deity and the worship of lesser deities believed to serve as the agents of that supreme deity with respect to specific aspects of daily life. In the east, where the large Igbo ethnic group is dominant, Catholics are in the majority, although many Igbos continue to observe traditional rites and ceremonies.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The law prohibits religious discrimination. Nonetheless, reports were common that government officials discriminated against persons practicing a religion different from their own, notably in hiring or awarding contracts. Christians in the northern, predominantly Muslim part of the country accused local government officials of attempting to use zoning regulations to stop or slow the establishment of non-Muslim, usually Christian, churches. Typically, a small section of a city was designated for non-Muslims to build their places of worship. In several cases, citizens in these enclaves reported that they were discriminated against by not receiving police protection or waste removal services.

On October 8, 1999, the governor of Zamfara state signed into law two bills aimed at instituting Islamic Shari'a law in his state. Implementation of the law began on January 22, 2000. Following Zamfara's lead, several northern states including Sokoto, Niger, and Kano states began to implement varying forms of expanded Shari'a. Previously, Shari'a law had been practiced in the north in the areas of per-



sonal law, only if both litigants agreed to settle their disputes in Shari'a courts. Elements of Shari'a also had been present in the northern penal code, which had been applicable in the north since independence.

As the result of nationwide violence in February and March 2000 related to the expansion of Shari'a laws (see Section II), several northern state governments banned open air preaching and public religious processions. The Kogi state government enacted such a ban on March 1, 2000. The Kaduna state government followed shortly thereafter, enacting a ban on all forms of "processions, rallies, demonstrations, and meetings in public places." On March 23, 2000, Gombe state officials arrested 19 reportedly peaceful persons for "unlawful assembly capable of causing a breach of peace in the state." Such bans were viewed as necessary public safety measures after the death of approximately 1,500 persons. However, large outdoor religious gatherings continued to be quite common, especially in the southern part of the country.

On February 29, 2000, in response to this nationwide violence, President Olusegun Obasanjo convened a meeting of the Nigerian Council of State, a consultative body consisting of the President and Vice President, all past heads of state and past chief justices, all governors, the Attorney General, and the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House. The result of the meeting was an agreement that northern governors would halt initiatives to expand Shari'a and return to the northern Nigerian Penal Code.

Although the expanded Shari'a laws technically do not apply to Christians, the Christian minority, especially in Zamfara state, was subjected to many of the social provisions of the law, such as the separation of the sexes in public transportation vehicles (a law that was repealed after only 2 weeks) and bans on the selling of alcohol. Niger state also enforced a ban on selling alcohol. However, the federal Government has disregarded the ban on alcohol sales in military installations. All Muslims were subjected to the new Shari'a provisions in the states that enacted them, which, according to many legal scholars, constitute an abridgement of their freedom of religion and conscience.

The Constitution states that "no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction, ceremony, or observance relates to a religion other than his own." The Government continued to enforce a 1987 ban on religious organizations on campuses of primary schools, although individual students retain the right to practice their religions in recognized places of worship. Islam is a mandatory part of the curriculum in public schools in Zamfara and other northern states, to the exclusion of Christianity.

According to the governor of Zamfara, Shari'a is supposed to apply to Muslims only; however, schoolchildren continue to be segregated by gender in Zamfara schools and preparations were underway for separate transportation and health facilities for men and women. The governor of Zamfara also disbursed public funds to refurbish mosques and pronounced that only persons with beards would win government contracts. In May 2000, Kebbi state also began to separate schoolchildren by gender.

Although distribution of religious publications remained generally unrestricted, the Government continued to enforce lightly a ban on published religious advertisements. There were reports by Christians in Zamfara state that the state government restricted the distribution of religious (Christian) literature. The Right Reverend Samson Bala, First Bishop of Zamfara, Gusau diocese, said that the state radio station had "closed its doors to Christians." Commercials and paid advertisements containing Christian literature are not accepted, he said, and only Islamic religious programs are aired.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country and do not face restrictions specifically designed to deter their activities. Many missionary groups have noted bureaucratic delays and obstruction and attempts to extort money for the processing of necessary residence permits for foreigners; however, many foreign businesses and other nonreligious organizations also have encountered similar difficulties. Rough estimates put the number of foreign missionaries at over 1,000, with many in the area around Jos, in Plateau state. The main Christian missionary groups include Jesuits, Dominicans, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ, and the Society for International Missions.

Following nationwide Shari'a-related violence in February and March 2000, public proselytizing in many northern states was banned, although it is permitted by the Constitution. Missionaries reported that law enforcement officials harassed them when they proselytized outside of their designated zones. Both Christian and Muslim organizations alleged that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Immigration Department restricted the entry into the country of certain religious practitioners,

particularly persons suspected of intending to proselytize. Proselytizing did not appear to be restricted in the southern part of the country.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In March 2000, the government of Zamfara state, under its newly expanded Shari'a statutes, amputated the right hand of a cow thief. The victim was quoted as saying that he voluntarily submitted to the full Shari'a proceedings, including amputation. After being convicted, he was entitled to an appeal, a right that he willingly waived. Other convicted Muslim criminals in Zamfara state were subjected to public floggings for various minor offenses.

There were no reports of detainees or prisoners imprisoned solely on religious grounds. In May 1999, the predominantly Shi'a Muslim Brotherhood published a list of 96 of its followers who were in prison or awaiting trial on charges that varied from preaching without a license to homicide. By the end of 1999, Ibrahim el-Zakzaky, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, was released from prison, along with most of the 96 followers who had been jailed in 1999.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II: SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The law prohibits religious discrimination. Private businesses frequently are guilty of informal religious and ethnic discrimination in their hiring practices and purchasing patterns.

Religious differences often correspond to regional and ethnic differences. For example, the northern region is overwhelmingly Muslim, as are the large Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups of that area. Many southern ethnic groups are predominantly Christian. Consequently, it is often difficult to distinguish religious discrimination and violence from ethnic and regional discrimination and violence, which is pervasive. The violence of the past year, although sparked by Muslim attempts to expand Shari'a law, had strong ethnic undertones, particularly the retributive violence that occurred in the southeast.

When Kaduna state announced plans to implement Shari'a law, the large Christian minority in the state protested on February 21, 2000, leading to several days of violent confrontations. Estimates of the number of persons killed range from 1,000 to 1,500; many churches and mosques were burned. Many Christians in the north, fearing continued violence, returned to their historic homelands in the southeast.

On February 28, 2000, when the bodies of the victims from the Kaduna violence were returned home to the southeast, reciprocal violence erupted in Aba, Abia state, and, to a lesser extent, in the neighboring towns of Owerri, Imo state, and Onitsha, Anambra state. This violence was characterized by attacks on the minority Muslim Hausas by the majority Igbos. Estimates of the number of persons killed range from 400 to 500. Many of the Hausas were victimized due to their ethnic identity rather than their religious beliefs.

In spite of the February 2000 agreement that northern governors would halt initiatives to expand Shari'a (see Section I), a few states continued to expand their Shari'a laws. Niger state declared that it would expand Shari'a laws on the same day as the Council of State meeting, and the amputation of the cow thief's right hand in Zamfara state occurred on March 23, 2000 (see Section I), 3 weeks after the Council of State agreement. Nonetheless, the broad political accommodation reached between the Government and the state governors on Shari'a appeared to be holding at the end of the period covered by this report, especially after public criticism at the amputation of the cow thief's hand. A court case challenging the constitutionality of Zamfara's Shari'a penal code was ongoing on June 30, 2000.

Following the violence related to the expansion of Shari'a laws, several committees were established, both by government officials and by religious leaders, to work for peace and a better understanding between Christians and Muslims, and to obtain a solution to the Shari'a debate. However, the efforts of these various committees did not result in a permanent solution as to how, or if, Shari'a will be permitted to expand into the criminal code of states that so desire it, by mid-2000.

In July 2000, a Hausa woman who violated a religious taboo against women viewing a Yoruba festival was killed by a mob. This incident ignited reciprocal violence on July 21, 1999 in the northern, predominantly-Hausa city of Kano, with the Hausa majority attacking the Yoruba minority. Approximately 80 persons died over a 4-day period; the majority of the victims were Yorubas.

In December 1999, in two attacks, 16 churches were burned and 1 clergyman was injured seriously by Muslim youths in the town of Ilorin, Kwara state. The churches reportedly were located in the Muslim part of town. The reason for the attacks was not clear. The Government's response was limited to pleas for calm and understanding, and there was no attempt to prosecute the perpetrators.

In addition to the violence related to the expansion of Shari'a law in Kaduna, Aba, Owerri, and Onitsha, there was civil unrest on March 7, 2000 in Sokoto following a pro-Shari'a rally by university students. Although there were no confirmed deaths, at least one church was burned and two others were vandalized. Local Christians sought refuge in military barracks, but they returned to their homes once calm was restored.

On March 27, 2000, at least one person was killed and several were injured in Borno state when a long-festering argument over the location of a church escalated into violence between Muslims and Christians. The church in question also was burned down.

On May 22 and 23, 2000, rioting erupted in Nayari, Kaduna state after Christian residents found the body of a person whom they believed to have been a Christian and killed by Muslims. Christians retaliated against Muslims and almost completely destroyed Muslim residences and businesses, causing many Muslim residents to flee. Press reports indicated that as many as 200 persons were killed, although this total could not be confirmed. The exact cause of the outbreak remains unclear, although some observers believe that the violence was organized and preplanned by Kaduna Christians in order to prevent Muslims from returning to the neighborhood to rebuild their community following the violence related to the expansion of Shari'a laws in February 2000.

### SECTION III: U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials frequently discuss the political and social situation with various religious leaders, who play a prominent role in civil society and in the human rights community. Embassy officers raised religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of the Embassy's overall efforts to promote respect for human rights. The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Embassy and in statements from officials in Washington, sought to encourage a peaceful resolution to the Shari'a issue and urged that human rights and religious freedom be respected in any resolution.

## RWANDA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it imposes some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Local officials on several occasions briefly detained persons who, on religious grounds, refused to participate in nighttime security patrols or cooperate in other government programs. There were unconfirmed reports that members of Jehovah's Witnesses were subject to harassment, arrest, and detention by authorities during the first 6 months of 2000. There was some tension between the Government and the Catholic Church over the trial of a bishop on genocide charges, and over the Government's continued determination to preserve some massacre sites in churches as genocide memorials. Relations among religions were generally amicable. Concern over the doomsday cult-related deaths in Uganda led the Government to caution local officials to watch for similar cults in Rwanda.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it imposes some restrictions. There is no state religion. The law provides for small fines and imprisonment for up to 6 months for anyone who interferes with a religious ceremony or with a minister in the exercise of his profession.

The Government requires nonprofit organizations, including religious groups, to register with the Ministry of Justice in order to acquire "juridical existence." This registration generally is routine and not burdensome. Relevant legislation makes no

provision for tax-exempt status for such organizations. Failure to register leaves an organization unable to legally conclude agreements with other organizations, including agreements to receive assistance.

#### *Religious Demography*

A 1996 sociodemographic survey by the Ministry of Finance, the Government's population office, and the U.N. Population Fund reported that 57.2 percent of the population identified themselves as Roman Catholic, 24 percent as Protestant, 1.4 percent as Adventist, 1.9 percent as Muslim, and that 4.5 percent professed no religion. There is also a small community of Baha'is and several congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. There has been a proliferation of small, usually Christian-linked sects since the 1994 genocide.

Foreign missionaries and church-linked nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) of various faiths operate in the country. The Government has welcomed their development assistance. Missionaries openly promote their religious beliefs.

There is no indication that religious belief is linked directly to membership in any political party. Of the eight parties, the only one with a religious component to its name—the Democratic Islamic Party—claims to have non-Muslim members.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. In some cases, students are given a choice between instruction in "religion" or "morals." Many years ago, missionaries established schools that are now operated by the Government. In those schools, religious instruction tends to reflect the denomination of the founders, either Catholic or Protestant. Christian and Muslim private schools operate as well.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government forbids religious meetings at night on the grounds that insurgents formerly used the guise of nighttime "religious meetings" to assemble their supporters before attacking nearby targets.

After the doomsday cult-related deaths in Uganda in March 2000, the Government cautioned local officials to be alert to similar cults in Rwanda. Following this caution from the Government, in April 2000, local officials detained nine leaders and members of a religious organization called the Evangelic Ministry in Africa and the World in Byumba prefecture, near the border with Uganda. This organization had convinced a number of persons to leave work or school and surrender their material possessions in expectation of an imminent second-coming of Christ.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Local officials on several occasions briefly detained persons who, on religious grounds, refused to participate in nighttime security patrols or cooperate in other government programs. Among the detainees were adherents of "Temperance" and "Abagorizi," both said to be offshoots of the Adventist Church and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Several members of the clergy of various faiths, notably Catholicism, have faced charges of genocide in both Rwandan courts and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). In June 2000, a Rwandan Court found Roman Catholic Bishop Augustin Misago not guilty of all charges related to his actions during the 1994 genocide. He was released soon after the decision was announced.

Catholic officials have charged that the Government is prejudiced against the Church. Catholic officials also have criticized the determination of the Government to maintain some massacre sites in churches as memorials to the genocide, rather than returning the buildings to the Church.

There were unconfirmed reports that members of Jehovah's Witnesses were subject to harassment, arrest, and detention by authorities during the first 6 months of 2000. Despite these accusations, there does not appear to be a pattern of systemic government discrimination against any particular religious group.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the different religious groups generally are amicable. Disputes between religious groups are rare.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials maintain regular contact with leaders and members of the religious communities in the country.

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**SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

*Religious Demography*

The country is predominantly Roman Catholic. Approximately 90 percent of the population are Catholic, 5 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, 5 percent are atheist, and less than 1 percent are Protestant.

There are no restrictions on the activities of foreign clergy. There are Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the country. Missionaries of other religions also operated unhindered.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy, based in Libreville, Gabon, discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

In addition, embassy officials regularly meet with the country's Catholic bishop during visits.

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**SENEGAL**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government maintains relations with all major religious groups in the country and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Constitution specifically defines the country as a secular state and provides for the free practice of religious beliefs, provided public order is maintained.

Religious organizations are completely independent of the Government and in practice administer their affairs without government interference. While individuals and groups may practice their beliefs without government sanction, any group—religious or other—that wants to form an association with legal status must register with the Minister of the Interior in accordance with the civil and commercial code. Registration, which generally is granted, enables an association to conduct business, including owning property, establishing a bank account, and receiving financial contributions from any private source. Registered religious groups, like all registered nonprofit organizations, also are exempt from many forms of taxation. The Minister of the Interior must have a legal basis for refusing registration. There were no reports of any applications for such registration being delayed or denied during the period covered by this report.

Religious organizations can receive direct financial and material assistance from the Government. While there is no official system of government grants, the importance of religion in society often results in the Government providing grants to religious groups to maintain their places of worship or undertake special events. The Government also provides funds through the Ministry of Education to schools operated by religious institutions that meet national education standards. In practice, Christian schools, which have a long and successful experience in education, receive the largest share of this government funding.

*Religious Demography*

According to current government demographic data, Islam is by far the predominant religion and is practiced by approximately 94 percent of the country's population. There is also an active Christian community (4 percent), including Roman Catholics and diverse Protestant denominations. Two percent (the rest of the population) practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion.

The country is ethnically and religiously diverse. Although there is significant integration of all groups, there are still identifiable geographic concentrations of some religious groups. The Christian minority is concentrated in the western and southern regions of the country, while groups that practice traditional religions are concentrated in the eastern and southern regions.

As the Constitution provides for separation of religion and state, religious education or worship is not permitted in public schools. Privately-owned schools, whether or not they receive government grants, may provide religious education. The majority of students attending Christian schools are Muslims.

A large variety of foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Catholics, Protestant denominations, independent missionaries, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Missionaries, like other long-term visitors, must obtain a residence visa issued by the Interior Ministry. Religious groups, including Islamic groups, often establish a presence in the country as nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). NGO's already registered in a foreign country obtain permission to operate in the country from the Minister of the Family, Social Action, and National Solidarity. Both religious and nonreligious NGO's are very active in providing social services and administering economic development assistance programs.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government monitors foreign missionary groups, and religious and nonreligious NGO's, to ensure that their activities coincide with their stated objectives. In the past, the Government has expelled such groups from the country when their activities were judged to be political in nature and a threat to public order. There were no reports of any foreign religious groups being asked to leave the country during the period covered by this report.

The Government encourages and helps to organize Muslim participation in the Hajj every year. It also provides similar assistance for an annual Catholic pilgrimage to the Vatican.

While there is no specific government-sponsored institution to promote inter-faith dialog, the Government generally seeks to promote religious harmony by maintaining relations with all important religious groups. Senior government officials regularly consult with religious leaders and the Government generally is represented at all major religious festivals or events.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religion plays an important role in the life of most citizens, and society is generally very open and tolerant of different religious faiths. The country has a long tradition of amicable and tolerant coexistence between the Muslim majority and the Christian, traditional indigenous, and other religious minorities. Inter-faith marriage is relatively common and within certain families other religious faiths, such as Christianity or a traditional indigenous religion, are practiced alongside Islam.

Islamic communities generally are organized around one of several brotherhoods, headed by a Khalif who is a direct descendant of the group's founder. The two largest and most prominent of these brotherhoods are the Tidjanes, based in the city of Tivouane, and the Mourides, based in the city of Touba. At times there have been disputes within the different brotherhoods over questions of succession or general authority. However, relations between these Islamic subgroups generally have been peaceful and cooperative. In recent years a National Committee to Coordinate Sightings of the Moon and hence the designation of Muslim holy days has been formed at the suggestion of the Government, effectively increasing cooperation among the Islamic subgroups.

While the brotherhoods are not involved directly in politics or government affairs, these groups exert considerable influence in society and therefore maintain a dialog with political leaders. Close association with a brotherhood, as with any influential community leader, religious or secular, may afford certain political and economic protections and advantages that are not conferred by law. During the campaign for the presidential elections held in February and March 2000, candidates consulted with and sought support of both Muslim and Christian religious leaders. While some religious leaders issued instructions to their followers to vote for certain candidates, this attempt to influence voters was not widely practiced and the election results revealed no apparent patterns of voting along religious lines. Of the six presidential candidates, only one represented a religious-based party founded by the leader of a small Islamic community. This candidate received less than 1 percent of the vote.

Leaders of the larger religious groups, both Islamic and Christian, have long maintained a public dialog with one another. For example, the former Archbishop who led the country's Catholic community and the Khalifs of the larger Islamic brotherhoods have for decades contributed to a positive inter-faith dialog. The Catholic-sponsored Brottier Center has promoted debate and dialog between Muslims and Christians on political and social issues that confront the country.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains relations with all major religious groups in the country. The Ambassador meets with the leaders or their representatives at various times throughout the year to discuss social and political issues. The Embassy maintains contacts with several religiously-based NGO's, Western missionary groups operating in the country, and human rights organizations and activists in order to monitor issues of religious freedom. The Ambassador or his representative regularly attends all major annual religious festivals or gatherings to promote an open dialog with various religious groups.

## SEYCHELLES

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh-Day Adventist churches and the Islamic mosques each have their own acts of incorporation. The Baha'i local spiritual assembly was incorporated in 1999. Other churches that are not a body corporate are registered as associations with the Registrar General and are entitled to tax-free privileges, similar to a charity. All religious organizations must register in order to be entitled to tax-free privileges. If an organization does not want tax-free privileges, it does not have to register.

The Government has not demonstrated favoritism toward one religion over another in the past, but in early 2000 the Seychelles National Party (SNP), which is the opposition political party and is led by an Anglican minister, claimed that the Government gave a grant of \$164,000 (SRS 900,000) to the Baha'i faith in 1999, following its incorporation. According to the SNP, this grant has not been offered to other faiths that have been established recently in the country. The Government has not responded to the SNP's claim. In May 2000, the Government announced that its employees who are Baha'i are allowed to take unpaid leave on Baha'i holy days. This leave has not been available previously to members of the Baha'i or other faiths. At the time of the announcement, the Government also stated that other religions could submit applications for the recognition of similar unpaid leave days. President France Albert Rene's wife of 10 years is a member of the Baha'i Faith while the majority of the government ministers are Catholic.

*Religious Demography*

According to figures gathered in the 1994 census, 88 percent of the population are Roman Catholic and 8 percent are Anglican. There are other Christian churches, including Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Assembly of God, the Pentecostal Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hinduism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith also are practiced. Almost 50 percent of the population are estimated to regularly practice their faith.

The Government tends to remain outside of religious matters, but provides program time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. On Sundays a radio broadcast of a Catholic Mass alternates each week with a broadcast of an Anglican service. All other faiths, including Islam, Adventist and Baha'i, are entitled to a 15-minute radio broadcast one Sunday a month.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious groups and tolerance for individual religious choice.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

**SIERRA LEONE**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in the society contribute to the free practice of religion.



The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The Government does not have requirements for recognizing, registering, or regulating religious groups.

##### *Religious Demography*

Reliable data on the exact numbers of those who practice major religions are not available. However, most sources estimate that the population is 60 percent Muslim, 30 percent Christian, and 10 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions.

Historically, most Muslims have been concentrated in the northern areas of the country, and Christians were located in the south. However, the ongoing civil war has resulted in movement by major segments of the population.

According to sources, many syncretistic practices exist, with up to 20 percent of the population practicing a mixture of Muslim and traditional indigenous practices or Christian and traditional indigenous practices.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Students are allowed to choose whether they attend either Muslim- or Christian-oriented classes.

The Government has not taken any specific steps to promote inter-faith understanding.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

##### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

In the past, rebel forces have attacked both churches and mosques and targeted Christian and Muslim religious leaders. In particular, the rebels have targeted Roman Catholic priests and nuns largely on the assumption that the Church would pay ransom for their return and because troops from the Economic Organization (of West African States) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) used their missionary radio network in support of the Government. During the period covered by this report, some religious leaders were targeted by rebels for their peacekeeping activities as members of civil society, not because of their religion.

#### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and inter-faith marriage is common. The Inter-Religious Council (IRC), composed of Christian and Muslim leaders, plays a vital role in civil society and actively participates in efforts to further the peace process. The IRC criticizes the use of force and atrocities committed by the rebels, endorses reconciliation and peace talks, and facilitates rehabilitation of the victims affected by the war, including former child soldiers.

#### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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## SOMALIA

There is no constitution and no legal provision for the protection of religious freedom; there were some limits on religious freedom.

There is no central government, but some local administrations, including the "Republic of Somaliland" and "Puntland," have made Islam the official religion in their regions. Local tradition and past law make proselytization a crime for any religion except Islam. Non-Sunni Muslims often are viewed with suspicion by members

of the Sunni majority. Christians and other non-Muslims who proclaim their religion sometimes face societal harassment.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government does not maintain an official presence in Somalia. This lack of diplomatic representation has limited the U.S. Government's ability to take action to promote religious freedom.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

There is no constitution and no legal provision for the protection of religious freedom; there were some limits on religious freedom.

There is no central government, but some local administrations, including the "Republic of Somaliland" and "Puntland", have made Islam the official religion in their regions. The judiciary in most regions relies on some combination of traditional and customary law (Xeer), Shari'a law, the penal code of the pre-1991 Siad Barre government, or some combination of the three. There are five Islamic courts operating in Mogadishu, which are aligned with different subclans, raising doubts about their independence. These courts generally refrained from administering the stricter Islamic punishments, such as amputation, but their militias administered summary punishments, including executions, in the city and its environs. With the collapse in December 1998 of the Shari'a courts in north Mogadishu headed by Sheikh Ali Dere, the application of physical punishment appears to have ceased.

In March 1999, the Minister of Religion in Somaliland issued a list of instructions and definitions on religious practices. Under the new rules, religious schools and places of worship are required to obtain the Ministry of Religion's permission to operate. Entry visas for religious groups must be approved by the Ministry, and certain unspecified doctrines are prohibited.

### *Religious Demography*

Citizens are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. There are a small number of non-Sunni Muslims. There is also a small, extremely low-profile Christian community, in addition to small numbers of adherents of other religions. In Somaliland, the number of adherents of radical Islam is growing. In 1999 there was an influx of foreign Muslims into Hargeisa in Somaliland, reportedly Islamic teachers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan (see Section II).

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Local tradition and past law make proselytization a crime for any religion except Islam. Proselytizing for any religion except Islam is prohibited by law in Puntland and Somaliland. Christian-based international relief organizations generally operate without interference, provided that they refrain from proselytizing.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal by local authorities to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Non-Sunni Muslims often are viewed with suspicion by members of the Sunni majority. There is strong social pressure to respect Islamic traditions, especially in enclaves controlled by radical Islamists, such as Luuq in the Gedo region. There was an increase in religious intolerance among Muslims by Al'Ittihad, a local radical Islamic group. In north Mogadishu, Al'Ittihad forcibly took over two mosques. There reportedly have been other mosque takeovers in Puntland and Lower Shabelle.

On June 15, 2000, a group of conservative Muslims threw a hand grenade into the compound of the Italian NGO COSV in Merca. The attack started out as a protest against alleged Christian proselytizing by teachers at COSV-funded schools. No one was injured in the attack, but staff members were evacuated, and COSV programs were suspended for 2 weeks.

In 1999 there was an influx of foreign Muslim teachers into Hargeisa in Somaliland to teach in new private Koranic schools. These schools are inexpensive and provide basic education; however, there were reports that these schools required

the veiling of small girls and other conservative Islamic practices not normally found in Somali culture.

There is a small, low-profile Christian community. Christians, as well as other non-Muslims, who proclaim their religion sometimes face societal harassment.

There are no ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater religious toleration.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain an official presence in Somalia. This lack of diplomatic representation has limited the U.S. Government's ability to take action to promote religious freedom.

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## SOUTH AFRICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Bill of Rights, included in the Constitution, specifically provides for and protects the freedom of religion. The Bill of Rights prohibits the State from unfairly discriminating directly or indirectly against anyone on the ground of religion, and it states that persons belonging to a religious community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community, to practice their religion and to form, join, and maintain religious associations. Cases of discrimination against a person on the grounds of religious freedom can be taken to the Constitutional Court.

Religious groups are not required to be licensed or registered.

#### *Religious Demography*

According to a 1996 census, approximately 77 percent of a population of more than 42 million adhere to the Christian faith. Hindus and Muslims each account for approximately 1 percent of the population, and about 0.4 percent are Jewish. There also are small numbers of followers of Buddhism and Confucianism. A sizable minority of the population, more than 15 percent, does not belong to any of the major religions, but regard themselves as followers of traditional indigenous religions or claim no specific religious affiliation.

The African Independent Churches make up the largest grouping of Christian Churches. There are 4,000 or more African Independent Churches, with a total membership of more than 10 million. Although these churches originally were founded as breakaways from various mission churches (the so-called Ethiopian churches), the African Independent Churches consist mostly of Zionist or apostolic churches and also include some Pentecostal offshoots. The Zion Christian Church is the largest African Independent Church. The African Independent Churches attract persons from rural and urban areas.

The Nederduits Gereformeerde, or Dutch Reformed, family of churches consists of 3 related churches that represent almost 5 million persons. The Nederduits Gereformeerde Church is the largest of these 3 churches with a total of 1,263 congregations. Its member churches are the United Reformed Church of South Africa and the small Reformed Church in Africa, whose members are predominantly Indian. The Nederduitsch Hervormde and Gereformeerde Churches also are regarded as part of the Dutch Reformed Church family. In recent years, there has been a move away from the Dutch Reformed churches by Afrikaners to charismatic and Baptist churches.

Other established Christian churches include the Roman Catholic Church, which has grown strongly in numbers and influence in recent years and consists of approximately 8.8 percent of the population; the Methodist Church (6.8 percent); the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican, 4.4 percent); various Lutheran

(2.9 percent) and Presbyterian churches (1.7 percent); and the Congregational Church (1.5 percent). Although they consist of less than 1 percent of the population, the Baptist churches represent a strong church tradition. The largest traditional Pentecostal churches are the Apostolic Faith Mission with a membership of 1.5 percent of the population, the Assemblies of God (0.6 percent), and the Full Gospel Church (1.8 percent). A number of charismatic churches have been established in recent years. The subsidiary churches of the charismatic churches, together with those of the Hatfield Christian Church in Pretoria, are grouped in the International Fellowship of Christian Churches. The Greek Orthodox and Seventh-Day Adventist Churches also are active.

More than 15 percent of the total population claim no affiliation with any formal religious organization. The majority of these persons adhere to traditional indigenous religions. A common feature of the traditional indigenous religions is the importance of ancestors. Also known as the "living dead," ancestors are regarded as part of the community and as indispensable links with the spirit world and the powers that control everyday affairs. Ancestors are not gods, but because they play a key part in bringing about either good or ill fortune, maintaining good relations with them is vital. Followers of traditional indigenous religions also believe that certain practitioners can manipulate the power of the spirits by applying elaborate procedures that are passed down through word-of-mouth. Some practitioners use herbs and other therapeutic techniques, as well as supernatural powers; others are masters of black magic and engender fear. As a result of close contact with Christianity, many persons find themselves in a transitional phase somewhere between traditional indigenous religions and Christianity.

Nearly two-thirds of Indians are Hindus, and the remainder is either Muslim (20 percent) or Christian (12 percent), with a small number of followers of various other religions. The Jewish population is probably not more than 100,000 persons, or 0.4 percent of the population. Of these, the majority is Orthodox Jews. There has been a slight shift towards the Muslim faith by blacks.

Churches are well attended in both rural and urban areas, and most are adequately staffed by a large number of clerics and officials.

A number of Christian organizations, including the Salvation Army, Promise Keepers, Operation Mobilization, Campus Crusade, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, operate in the country doing missionary work, giving aid, and providing training. The Muslim World League also is active in the country, as is the Zionist International Federation.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Constitution states that religious instruction at public schools is permitted so long as it is voluntary and religions are treated equally; however, the Department of Education still is using a syllabus that requires public schools to administer one period of religious instruction a week. The syllabus provides six options for religious instruction: Bible Education, Hindu Studies, Islamic Studies, Religious Education, Right Living, and Scripture. Many public schools have dropped religious instruction in practice. In schools that do administer religious instruction, students have the right not to attend the religious instruction, and school authorities respect this right in practice. A new syllabus has been drafted that, if implemented, would provide for voluntary, not mandatory, religious instruction in public schools. There are some private religious schools in which religious instruction is required.

Members of the group People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) complained that they were the targets of police brutality. PAGAD is an Islamic-oriented community-based organization that engaged in acts of intimidation and violence against some suspected drug dealers, gang leaders, and critics of PAGAD's violent vigilantism, including anti-PAGAD Muslim clerics, academics, and business leaders. PAGAD's earlier tactics of mass marches and drive-by shootings largely have been replaced by pipe-bomb attacks. There was no indication that police targeted PAGAD members for investigation because of their religious affiliation. Some religious communities believe that the Government is too lenient in regards to PAGAD.

PAGAD has been influenced heavily by Qibla, a radical Islamic-based political group created in 1979 to promote the establishment of an Islamic state in South Africa. Qibla is organized into cells in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and its membership is thought to number only a few hundred. Qibla leaders dominate the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC), an umbrella body formed in 1994 that claims to represent more than 200 small Muslim organizations.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable. However, there is a concern among Christians about the perceived growing influence of Islam. Reports of violence perpetrated by PAGAD have fueled these concerns.

PAGAD portrays itself as a community organization opposed to crime, gangsterism, and drugs; however, it is known for its violent vigilantism (see Section I). PAGAD also claims to be a multifaith movement, even though the vast majority of its members are Muslim. PAGAD is most active in the Western Cape, but also has branches elsewhere in the country. Surveys indicated that some two-thirds of Muslims supported PAGAD soon after its inception in 1995, but that figure has dropped significantly since; the vast majority of Muslims no longer support PAGAD. While PAGAD continues to lose support when it is linked to violent acts, it gains sympathy any time high-profile incidents occur that are perceived by the Muslim community to have been acts of discrimination against Muslims.

In January 1997, a mosque in Rustenberg was struck in a series of bombings that also struck a post office and general store and injured two persons. The State's case is closed and sentencing of the three persons convicted is scheduled for September 4, 2000. Two of the convicted have been released on approximately \$11,500 (Rand 80,000) bail and one on \$7,100 (Rand 50,000) pending sentencing.

In December 1998, a synagogue in Wynberg was bombed. Four suspects have been arrested and their trial was still pending as of June 30, 2000.

There were occasional reports of killings linked to the continued practice of witchcraft in some rural areas. In the Northern Province, where traditional beliefs regarding witchcraft remain strong, officials reported dozens of killings of persons suspected of witchcraft. The Government has instituted educational programs to prevent such actions.

There are many official and unofficial bilateral and multilateral ecumenical contacts between the various churches. The largest of these is the South African Council of Churches (SACC), which represents the Methodist Church, the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican), various Lutheran and Presbyterian churches, and the Congregational Church, among others. The major traditional indigenous religions, most of the Afrikaans-language churches, and the Pentecostal and charismatic churches are not members of the SACC and usually have their own coordinating and liaison bodies. The Roman Catholic Church's relationship with other churches is becoming more relaxed and it works closely with other churches on the socio-political front.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy have frequent contact with leaders and members of all religious communities in the country.

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**SUDAN**

The Constitution, implemented in early 1999, provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely restricts freedom of religion in practice. The Government treats Islam as the state religion and has declared that it must inspire the country's laws, institutions, and policies.

The status of respect for religious freedom has not changed fundamentally in recent years, and, particularly in the south, the Government continues to enforce numerous restrictions. Authorities continued to restrict the activities of Christians, followers of traditional indigenous religions, and other non-Muslims. Non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize. There also continued to be reports that security forces regularly harassed and at times used threats and violence against persons based on their religious beliefs and activities. As part of the civil war, the Government and government-supported forces were responsible for indiscriminate bombings, the burning and looting of villages, and the killings, abductions, rapes, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of civilians, most of whom were Christians or practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. However, there were some areas in which the

Government took steps that improved the situation somewhat. For example, religious prisoners and detainees were released, enforcement of public order laws was relaxed, women imprisoned under the public order law were released, and restrictions on religious visitors and gatherings were eased. Traditionally there have been amicable relations between the various religious communities, and the practice of religions other than Islam remains legal. Non-Muslims legally are free to adhere to and practice their faiths; however, in practice the Government's treatment of Islam as the state religion creates an atmosphere in which non-Muslims are treated as second-class citizens.

The U.S. Government's efforts in Sudan have been limited by the nonresident status of U.S. diplomats prior to August 1998 and by the evacuation of the Embassy's American staff in August 1998. Nonresident American diplomats resumed visits to Khartoum in late February 2000. The U.S. Government has made it clear to the Government of Sudan that the issue of religious freedom is one of the key problems impeding a positive relationship between Sudan and the U.S. The issue of religious freedom has been raised consistently with both the Government and the populace by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Special Envoy for Sudan Harry Johnston, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice, the U.S. mission to Sudan (resident in Nairobi), and U.S. Missions to international forums. In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Sudan a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution, implemented in early 1999, provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely restricts freedom of religion in practice. The Government treats Islam as the state religion and has declared that it must inspire the country's laws, institutions, and policies. The Constitution states that "Shari'a and custom are the sources of legislation."

Religious organizations are subject to the 1994 Societies Registration Act. It theoretically allows churches to engage in a wide range of activities, but subjects churches to the same restrictions placed on nonreligious corporations. Religious groups, like all other organizations, must be registered in order to be recognized or to gather legally. The Government also requires that houses of worship be approved. Registered religious groups are exempt from most taxes. Nonregistered religious groups, on the other hand, find it impossible to construct a place of worship or to assemble legally. Registration reportedly is very difficult to obtain in practice, and the Government does not treat all groups equally in the approval of such registrations and licenses. The Government reportedly is working on new legislation to replace the Societies Registration Act, but has not yet invited the participation of religious groups.

In recent years, the Roman Catholic Church has not been given permission to build new churches, although some other Christian groups have received permission. Islamic orders associated with opposition political parties, particularly the Khatimia, regularly are denied permission to hold large public gatherings. No permits have been granted for church construction in Khartoum state in recent years, despite the influx of non-Muslims to the capital.

##### *Religious Demography*

Sudan is a religiously mixed country, although Muslims have dominated national government institutions since independence. There are no accurate figures on the sizes of the country's religious populations. A large majority of the population of approximately 30 million persons is Muslim: more than 75 percent of the population are Muslim and adherents include numerous Arabic and non-Arabic groups. Muslims predominate in the north. There are sizable minorities of Christians and practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Most citizens in the south adhere to either Christianity or traditional indigenous religions. There are reliable reports that Christianity is growing rapidly in the south, particularly in areas outside of government control. There is also evidence that many new converts to Christianity continue to adhere to elements of traditional indigenous practices. The influx of 1 to 2 million southerners displaced by the war has brought sizable communities of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and Christians to the north. There are also small but influential and long-established populations of Greek Orthodox and Coptic Rite Christians centered around Khartoum. About 500,000 Coptic Christians live in the north. There are a few atheists and agnostics in the country, but exact figures are not available.

The Muslim population is almost entirely Sunni but is divided into many different groups. The most significant divisions occur along the lines of the Sufi brotherhood. Two brotherhoods, the Ansar and the Khatimia, are associated closely with the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), respectively.

Northern Muslims form a majority of the population, and government institutions are dominated by northern Muslims of Arabic origin. The southern ethnic groups fighting the civil war (largely followers of traditional indigenous religions or Christians and largely of African origin) seek independence, or some form of regional self-determination, from the north.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Authorities continued to restrict the activities of Christians, followers of traditional indigenous beliefs, and other non-Muslims, as well as certain Islamic groups.

Muslims may proselytize freely in government-controlled areas, but non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize. Missionaries continue to do other work, and a wide range of Christian missionary groups operated in both government and rebel-controlled areas of the country. However, authorities often harassed foreign missionaries and other religiously oriented organizations and delayed their requests for work permits and residence visas. A foreign priest was deported in August 1999. The priest reportedly was summoned by the Immigration Department on July 15, 1999, and told to leave the country within 2 weeks. No reason was given for his expulsion. The Government is generally least restrictive of Christian groups that historically have had a presence in the country, including Copts, Roman Catholics, and Greek Orthodox, and is more restrictive of newer arrivals.

Although the Government considers itself an Islamic government, restrictions often are placed on the religious freedoms of Muslims, particularly on those orders linked to opposition to the Government. Islamic orders such as the Khatimia regularly are denied permission to hold large public gatherings. In November 1999, a religious leader was arrested and detained, along with some followers, allegedly for accusing the Government of being insufficiently Islamic. Authorities released all of those detained within 1 week.

While the government permits non-Muslims to participate in services in existing, authorized places of worship, the Government continued to deny permission for the construction of Roman Catholic churches, although some other Christian groups have received permission. However, the Government permitted some makeshift structures to be used for Roman Catholic services.

There is a longstanding dispute between the Episcopal Church and the Government. In September 1999, the Episcopal Church stated that the Government had moved to seize a portion of the property on which the church office in Omdurman stands. A government-run health care center had operated on the site since 1973. The Church claims that it has a freehold title to the land, while the Government claims that it is a leased. The Church claims that the courts would not act independently of the Government in the case. The Church sent a memo to the Office of the President concerning the issue, but the President's Office replied that the case was a state rather than a federal issue. At a June 19, 2000 court session, a decision on the matter was postponed until August 2000.

In 1996 an Episcopal church was built in the FeteHab neighborhood of Omdurman. In 1998 local residents filed a case against the church for disturbances, and authorities closed the church as a result. The case was forwarded to the Attorney General, but no decision was issued on this matter as of mid-2000. Reportedly the Episcopal church tried to resolve the conflict by applying to state authorities for approval to build another church in a different location; however, the state authorities did not grant approval.

The Khartoum state government continued to raze thousands of squatter dwellings around Khartoum, which largely are populated by displaced southerners, including large numbers of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and Christians. Earlier improvements in procedures to grant squatters legal title to land in other areas and to move squatters in advance of demolitions continued. In October 1999, the First Vice President directed that demolition of churches and other Christian facilities in Khartoum be suspended and that a committee be formed under the Second Vice President to review the issue. Some church officials indicated that the number of church and school demolitions in squatter areas has declined, apparently because the replanning of squatter areas is largely complete.

The Government requires instruction in Islam for Muslim students in public schools in the north. In public schools in areas in which Muslims are not a majority, students have a choice of studying Islam or Christianity; however, Christian courses are not offered in the majority of public schools, ostensibly due to a lack of teachers

or Christian students and, in practice, this means that many Christian students attend Islamic courses.

In government-controlled areas of the south, there continued to be credible evidence of prejudice in favor of Muslims and an unwritten policy of Islamization of public institutions, despite an official policy of local autonomy and federalism. In the past, some non-Muslims lost their jobs in the civil service, the judiciary, and other professions. Few non-Muslim university graduates found government jobs. Some non-Muslim businessmen complained of petty harassment and discrimination in the awarding of government contracts and trade licenses. There also were reports that Muslims received preferential treatment for the limited services provided by the Government, including access to medical care.

In accordance with Islamic law, a Muslim woman has the right to hold and dispose of her own property without interference, and women are ensured inheritance from their parents. However, a daughter inherits half the share of a son, and a widow inherits a smaller percentage than do her children. It is much easier for men to initiate legal divorce proceedings than for women. Islamic family law applies to Muslims and not to those of other faiths, for whom religious or tribal laws apply. A Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim; however, a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim unless he converts to Islam. However, this prohibition is not observed or enforced in areas of the south not controlled by the Government, nor among Nubans.

Children who have been abandoned or whose parentage is unknown—regardless of presumed religious origin—are considered by the state to be both citizens and Muslims and can be adopted only by Muslims. Non-Muslims may adopt only other non-Muslim children. No equivalent restriction is placed on the adoption by Muslims of orphans or other children. In accordance with Islamic law, children adopted by Muslims do not take the name of their adopted parents and are not automatic heirs to their property.

Various government bodies have decreed on different occasions that women must dress according to modest Islamic standards, including wearing a head covering. In January 1999, the governor of Khartoum state announced that women in public places and government offices, and female students and teachers would be required to conform to what is deemed an Islamic dress code. However, none of these decrees have been the subject of legislation. Enforcement of the dress code regulations was reduced greatly during the period covered by this report. Women often were seen in public wearing trousers or with their heads uncovered. Public Order Police generally only gave warnings for improper dress.

In rebel-controlled areas, Christians, Muslims, and followers of traditional indigenous beliefs generally worship freely, although it appears that many of the region's Muslim residents have departed voluntarily over the years. The rebel SPLM officially favors secular government; however, the movement is dominated by Christians, and local SPLM authorities often have a very close relationship with local Christian religious authorities. There is no evidence that this close relationship has resulted in a failure to respect the rights of practitioners of other religions.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

There continued to be reports that security forces regularly harassed and at times used threats and violence against persons on the basis of their religious beliefs and activities.

Catholic priests report that they routinely are stopped and interrogated by police. Security forces also detained persons apparently in relation to their religious beliefs and activities. Generally, detentions based nominally on religion were of limited duration; because the practice of religion is not technically illegal, detainees could not be held formally on those grounds indefinitely. However, in the past the Government often resorted to accusing, at times falsely, those arrested for religious reasons of other crimes, including common crimes and national security crimes, which resulted in prolonged detentions.

On August 8, 1999, a group of members of the Ansar al Sunna Muslim group reportedly threw stones at a Christian center in the Doroshab neighborhood of Khartoum North. When a member of the center's staff went to the local police, the police refused to take action, instead briefly detaining the staff member. He subsequently was released.

There were reports that police in Hilla Kuku harassed members of the Catholic Church. A Catholic seminarian stated that police stopped him at the bus station in Hilla Kuku on June 22, 2000 and told him to remove a wooden cross that he was wearing. After he refused, the police took him to a police station where they detained him and beat him on his neck and right wrist with a stick. After 3 hours, the police returned his cross and released him. On July 7, 2000, a foreign Catholic



Church worker was stopped at the bus station in Hilla Kuku and forced into a car by unidentified men who were reportedly plainclothes security personnel. According to the worker, he initially was questioned in the car; however, after he called for help on his mobile telephone, he was blindfolded and taken to an unidentified house. In the house, he was kept in a chair with his hands tied behind his back and questioned about church activities. He was treated abusively and believes that he may have been drugged. His captors released him after dark, but warned him not to discuss what had happened.

The Government officially exempts the 10 southern states, whose population is mostly non-Muslim, from parts of the Criminal Act. The Act permits physical punishments, including lashings, amputations and stonings, based on Shari'a (Islamic law). In late 1999 and early 2000 in the north, the Government reportedly carried out amputations under Islamic law for the first time. Reports indicate that the Government carried out three amputations during the period covered by this report as punishment for violent crimes that resulted in death. All those sentenced to amputations reportedly were Muslims. No reports cited court-ordered Islamic law punishments, other than lashings, in government-controlled areas of the south. The act could be applied in the south, if the state assemblies so decide. Fear of the imposition of Islamic law fueled support for the civil war.

During the period covered by the report, 73 Christian secondary-school students in Khartoum reportedly were not allowed to continue their compulsory military service because they left their duties to attend church. The students, who had been training at a police unit in Jebel Awlia province in Khartoum state, said that they received physical abuse and insults from the police during the exercise. They claimed to be among 231 Christians out of 1,200 students at the camp. The national service coordination office in Khartoum state reportedly denied that there was a problem at the training camps.

Government authorities, using soldiers for security, have razed approximately 30 religious buildings with bulldozers since 1990.

While non-Muslims may convert to Islam, the 1991 Criminal Act makes apostasy (which includes conversion to another religion) by Muslims punishable by death. In mid-1998, the government began prosecution of an apostasy case against Faki Koko, a Nuban, who was accused of converting from Islam. Faki Koko reportedly was released during 1999 and allowed to leave the country for health reasons without charge or trial, although his current status and location remain unclear.

Popular Defense Forces trainees, including non-Muslims, are indoctrinated in the Islamic faith. In prisons government-supported Islamic nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) pressure and offer inducements to non-Muslim inmates to convert. Some NGO's reported that persons in the government-controlled peace camps were subject to forced labor and at times were pressured to convert to Islam. Children, including non-Muslim children, in government-controlled camps for vagrant minors are required to study the Koran, and there is pressure on non-Muslim children to convert to Islam.

The Government charged Reverend Hillary Boma and Reverend Lino Sebit, along with 18 other persons, with involvement in the June 1998 Khartoum bombings, but released them in December 1999. The charges were viewed widely as unsubstantiated and possibly designed to intimidate Christians and the political opposition.

Since the civil war resumed in 1983, an estimated 2 million persons have been killed and 4 million displaced internally as a result of fighting between the Government and insurgents in the south. The civil war continued during the reporting period despite limited cease-fires, and all sides involved in the fighting were responsible for abuses in violation of humanitarian norms. Government and government-supported forces in particular are responsible for the killings, abductions, rapes, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of civilians, and for the burning and looting of villages. There is a religious aspect to the civil war: the Government is dominated by northern Muslims, while the southern ethnic groups fighting the civil war are largely followers of traditional indigenous religions or Christians.

As part of the civil war, the Government has engaged in a program of high altitude, indiscriminate bombing of southern areas, particularly in the states of Equatoria, Western Upper Nile, and the Nuba Mountains. The bombings hit schools, medical facilities, and civilian buildings in these areas inhabited primarily by persons practicing traditional African religions and by Christians. For example, Catholic Bishop Macram Max Gassis reported that on February 8, 2000, Government forces bombed a Catholic school in his diocese in the Nuba Mountains killing at least 14 children and 1 teacher, and wounding 14 other persons. Government officials described the incident as a legitimate bombing. In April 2000, the Government, responding to international pressure, announced a halt to aerial bombardments "except in self defense and in active operations areas."

The taking of slaves, particularly in war zones, and their transport to parts of central and northern Sudan, continued, and was due, in part, to the victims' religious beliefs. There were frequent and credible reports that Baggara raiders, armed and reportedly supported by the Government, attacked a number of villages in the Bahr al Ghazal region, taking a number of persons, almost exclusively women and children, as slaves. For example, there was a report in July 1999 that the army attacked the towns in Ruweng county, burning several churches, abducting hundreds of persons, and killing dozens of civilians. The victims in the villages were largely Christians or practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Some children from Christian and other non-Muslim families, captured and sold into slavery, were converted forcibly to Islam. Militia and Baggara raids were reduced significantly during the period covered by this report, due largely to a reconciliation between the Dinka and Nuer tribes in March 1999.

In June 2000, a group of 12 armed police entered the priests' residence of the Catholic Comboni College secondary school with a warrant to search for illegal immigrants and foreign currency. The rooms of two priests and a medicine storeroom were searched. The police did not arrest anyone, and spoke with one priest. Police took a camera, a file of newspaper cuttings, five boxes of slides, a corrector tape, three floppy disks, and a bottle of whiskey. The items were accounted for at the time and returned 2 days later. A mobile telephone and cash are believed to have disappeared, but were not listed among the items taken by police during the search. No charges were filed in the case. The Catholic Comboni College has a religiously and ethnically mixed student body and generally operates without interference or harassment.

In July 1999, the principal of an Episcopal Church school in Haj Yusuf requested assistance from the commissioner of Khartoum North to build a new classroom. After construction, the commissioner asserted that the school belonged to the Government. The Church refused to hand over the school, and the commissioner filed suit against the church. Both the court and the state governor have directed the commissioner to cede control of the school to the Church, but reportedly the commissioner has been reluctant to obey. In December 1999, police injured five persons in a clash in northwest Khartoum over this issue. The school remained closed as of June 30, 2000.

#### *Improvements in Religious Freedom*

There were some areas of improvement in the Government's respect for religious freedom. During the period covered by this report, the Public Order Police (controlled by Khartoum state) were less extreme in their application of the Public Order Law. Women were seen more commonly without head coverings and wearing trousers. When stopped by the Public Order Police, they commonly were warned rather than detained. In May 2000, President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir ordered that all women in prison for violations of the Public Order Law be released. Of the 563 women released, most were non-Muslims convicted of illegally making and selling alcohol; however, some women reportedly were subsequently arrested for illegally making and selling alcohol. Public Order Courts and their special judges were abolished. The Minister of Justice indicated in June 2000 that the Ministry was writing a new national public order law; however, no changes were implemented by June 30, 2000. During the period covered by this report, prisoners held on religious or seemingly religiously related grounds were released. Faki Koko, allegedly held for apostasy, reportedly was released during 1999 and allowed to leave the country for health reasons without charge or trial. Reverend Hillary Boma and Reverend Lino Sebit, along with 18 other persons charged with involvement in the June 1998 Khartoum bombings, were released in December 1999 by presidential decree.

On at least some occasions, restrictions on religious visitors and gatherings were relaxed. During the period covered by this report, the Archbishop of Canterbury visited the country. German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke also visited the country and held open-air services in Khartoum attended by tens of thousands. Catholic Church representatives stated that jubilee festivities attended by thousands of persons routinely took place during the period covered by this report in government-held areas without interference or harassment.

In May 1998, the Government formed the Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children, which has identified over 700 abductees, and returned many of them to their families. The taking of slaves is due, in part, to the victims' religious beliefs: abductees are largely Christians or practitioners of traditional indigenous religions.

The Government sometimes works with the Islamic Council of Ulama, the Sudan Council of Churches, and the Religious Dialogue to encourage inter-faith dialog, but

has not formed a specific mechanism for dialog in recent years. The Government maintains regular contact with many of the country's religious leaders.

Government and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) delegations participated in IGAD-mediated peace talks in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 1999, and in January, February, and April 2000. The delegations continued discussions of the role of religion in national affairs and the predominantly non-Muslim southern region's right to self-determination.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Traditionally there have been amicable relations between the various religious communities, although there were a small number of clashes. For example, on August 8, 1999, a group of members of the Ansar al Sunna Muslim group reportedly threw stones at a Christian center in the Doroshab neighborhood of Khartoum North (see Section I).

Non-Muslims legally are free to adhere to and practice their faiths; however, in practice, the Government's treatment of Islam as the state religion creates an atmosphere in which non-Muslims are treated as second class citizens.

There are reliable reports that Islamic NGO's in war zones withhold other services from the needy unless they convert to Islam. There also were reports that Christian NGO's used their services to pressure persons to convert to Christianity.

Leaders of religious communities meet informally to discuss community relations.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government's efforts in Sudan have been limited by the nonresident status of U.S. diplomats prior to August 1998 and by their evacuation that month. Nonresident American diplomats resumed visits to Khartoum in late February 2000. Nonetheless, the U.S. Government and the U.S. Embassy accredited to the Government of Sudan, whose American staff is based in Nairobi and Cairo, have made concerted efforts to encourage respect for religious freedom. The U.S. Government has made it clear to the Government of Sudan that the issue of religious freedom is one of the key problems impeding a positive relationship between Sudan and the United States. The Embassy consistently raised the issue at all levels of government, including with the Foreign Minister. While present in Khartoum, representatives of the Embassy regularly meet with leaders of the religious communities in the country.

During an October 1999 visit to Nairobi, Secretary of State Albright met with a group of Christian and Muslim representatives of civil society from northern and southern Sudan, including Catholic Bishop Erkanan Lodu Tombe of Yei, and discussed the difficulties encountered by both Christians and Muslims.

Special Envoy Johnston visited the country in March and June 2000. During his two visits, he consistently and strongly raised the issue of religious freedoms at all levels of government, including with the First Vice President. He particularly emphasized the need for national law to reflect the country's diversity and the practical need for non-Muslims to be able to build houses of worship freely. Johnston credited the Government with progress in identifying and returning abductees through the Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children, which has identified over 700 individuals. Johnston also met with prominent Christian and Muslim leaders.

The U.S. Embassy and the Department of State worked to forcefully raise religious freedom issues publicly in press statements and at international forums, including the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Sudan a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

## SWAZILAND

There are no formal constitutional provisions for freedom of religion; however, the Government respects freedom of religion in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

There are no formal constitutional provisions for freedom of religion; however, the Government respects freedom of religion in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Followers of all religious faiths are free to worship without government interference or restriction. The ongoing constitutional review process is expected to address the issue of freedom of religion.

New religious groups or churches are expected to register with the Government upon organizing in the country. To be considered organized a religious group or church must demonstrate either possession of substantial cash reserves or financial support from outside religious groups with established ties to Western or Eastern religions. For indigenous religious groups or churches, authorities consider demonstration of a proper building, a pastor or religious leader, and a congregation as sufficient to grant organized status. However, there is no law describing the organizational requirements of a religious group or church. While organized churches are exempt from paying taxes, they are not considered tax-deductible charities. All religions are unofficially recognized.

### *Religious Demography*

Christianity is the dominant religion, with the Anglican and Methodist Churches strongly represented. A large Roman Catholic presence, including churches, schools, and other infrastructure, still flourishes. Zionism (a local term for this religion) is a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship and is the prominent religion in rural areas. Followers of Islam and the Baha'i Faith generally are located in urban areas. It is estimated that the population is 40 percent Zionist, 20 percent Roman Catholic, and 10 percent Islamic, with the remaining 30 percent divided between Anglican, Methodist, Baha'i, Mormon, Jewish, and other beliefs.

Missionaries inspired much of the country's early development and still play a role in rural development. Missionaries are mostly Western Christians, including Baptists, Mormons, evangelicals, and other Christians. Baha'is are the most active non-Christian missionaries.

While the Government primarily observes Christian holidays, the monarchy (and by extension the Government) supports many religious activities in addition to Easter and Christmas. For example, the royal family often attends public evangelical programs.

Portions of the capital city are zoned specifically for church buildings of all denominations. Those religious groups that wish to construct new buildings may purchase a plot and apply for the required building permits. Any religion with the financial means may build a place of worship.

The Government neither restricts nor formally promotes inter-faith dialog, and it does not provide formal mechanisms for religions to reconcile differences. Churches have access to the courts as private entities.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious diversity is respected. Five different denominations maintain adjoining properties peacefully. There was no public conflict among faiths during the period covered by this report.

The Christian churches are well organized and are divided into three groups: the Council of Churches, the League of Churches, and the Conference of Churches. Each of these bodies represent the full spectrum of Christian denominations in the coun-

try and primarily concern themselves with producing common statements on political issues, sharing radio production facilities, or engaging in common rural development and missionary strategies. The various churches belong to these organizations for the collective benefits derived from such unity. Each organization has strong opinions, and they do not always speak with one voice. However, on several occasions, they have come together to address common issues.

Beginning in 1996, the different denominations came together in a series of meetings to discuss whether the churches should speak out publicly about the political situation in the country and about the drafting of the country's third constitution.

Further, the Council of Churches, along with the National Democratic Institute (an American nongovernmental organization) hosted a conference in May 2000 on constitutional issues. Freedom of religion in the country was not an issue during the conference.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy maintains contact and good relations with the various religious organizations.

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## TANZANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, subject to measures that it claims are necessary to ensure public order and safety.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Generally there are stable relations between the various religious communities; however, some urban Muslim groups are sensitive to perceived discrimination in government hiring and law-enforcement practices. In addition, there is some tension between secular and fundamentalist Muslims.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, subject to measures that it claims are necessary to ensure public order and safety. The Government does not penalize or discriminate against any individual on the basis of religious beliefs or practices, and it does not designate religion on any passports or records of vital statistics. However, individual government officials are alleged to favor persons who share the same religion in the conduct of business.

The Government requires that religious organizations register with the Registrar of Societies at the Home Affairs Ministry. In order to register, religious organizations must have at least 10 followers and must provide a constitution, the resumes of their leaders, and a letter of recommendation from their district commissioner. Groups no longer are required to provide three letters of recommendation from the leaders of registered Christian churches or from registered mosques.

Prior to 2000, religious groups were exempt from paying taxes because they were presumed to be nonprofit organizations. The Government discovered in 1998 that some religious groups were importing goods duty-free and then selling them for a profit, and began requiring these groups to pay taxes. After successfully identifying these organizations, the Government now allows legitimate religious groups to order goods internationally without paying duty, provided they receive an exemption certificate from the Tanzania Revenue Authority.

#### *Religious Demography*

Christians, including Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Protestants, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, constitute approximately 45 percent of a population of about 30 million. Approximately 40 percent of the population are Muslim. Adherents of traditional indigenous religions and atheists account for approximately 10 percent of the population. Approximately 5 percent of the population practice other faiths, including Hinduism and Buddhism.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The law prohibits preaching if it incites persons against other religions. In July 1999, police used tear gas and clubs to disperse a peaceful demonstration by Muslims protesting a government ban on Muslim school uniforms in public schools. In September 1999, police arrested a popular Muslim leader for inciting his followers against other religions. A week later, the police canceled a planned Muslim demonstration to protest his arrest. In October 1999, the Muslim leader was charged with seditious intent and denied bail.

In February 1998, police arrested a popular Muslim leader for violating this law, which triggered widespread riots in the Mmwembechi area of Dar Es Salaam. Police opened fire on the protesters, killing three persons and wounding several others. Approximately 200 Muslims were arrested. There are reports that police tortured and sexually humiliated a group of Muslim women arrested during the riots and forced them to sing Christian songs while in custody. Riots broke out again in March 1998 after police cancelled a scheduled demonstration protesting the treatment of these women. Authorities used tear gas, water cannons, and clubs to quell the rioters; at least a dozen persons were injured and at least 50 Muslims were arrested.

With the October 2000 elections on the horizon, government officials have warned religious leaders to avoid using religion to incite their adherents to violence during and after the electoral campaign. Thus far, a repeat of the 1998 Muslim riots in Dar Es Salaam has not occurred, although undercurrents of Christian-Muslim tension remain in some quarters (see Section II).

The Government failed to respond to growing tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities (see Section II). The Government appears to recognize that a problem exists, but it chose not to take action. The Government cancelled several meetings with Muslim and Christian leaders aimed at improving relations between the two communities. Even senior Muslim officials in the Government appear unwilling to address the problem, apart from general criticism of those who would foment religious conflict.

National and regional parole boards, constituted in 1998, were dissolved when it was found that they did not include Muslim members, and the Government named new boards in January 1999. It was disclosed in February 1999 that the Government was investigating reports that the National Muslim Council of Tanzania was receiving millions of dollars from unknown sources in the Middle East and was considered a possible "security risk."

The Government has banned religious organizations from involvement in politics.

Customary or statutory law in both civil and criminal matters governs Christians. Muslims may apply either customary law or Islamic law in civil matters. Zanzibar's court system generally parallels the mainland's legal system but retains Islamic courts to adjudicate cases of Muslim family law, such as divorce, child custody, and inheritance.

Missionaries are allowed to enter the country freely, particularly if proselytizing is ancillary to other religious activities. Citizens are allowed to go abroad for pilgrimages and other religious practices.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While Muslim-Christian relations are generally stable, some urban Muslim groups are sensitive to perceived discrimination in government hiring and law enforcement practices. For example, Muslim women charged that human rights organizations in the country ignored police abuses against them following the dispersal of the rioters in Mmwembechi (see Section I).

The Muslim community claims to be disadvantaged in terms of its representation in the civil service, government, and parastatal institutions, in part because both colonial and early post-independence administrations refused to recognize the credentials of traditional Muslim schools. As a result, there is broad Muslim resentment of certain advantages that Christians are perceived to enjoy in employment and educational opportunities. Muslim leaders have complained that the number of Muslim students invited to enroll in government-run schools still was not equal to

the number of Christians. In turn, Christians criticize what they perceive as lingering effects of undue favoritism accorded to Muslims in appointments, jobs, and scholarships by former President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim. Despite these perceptions, there does not appear to be a serious widespread problem of religious discrimination in access to employment or educational opportunities.

A few leaders in the Christian and Muslim communities appear to be fomenting religious tension between their groups. For example, there were reports that some Muslims leaders distributed audiotapes of the Mkwembechi riots to the Muslim community; the tapes later were outlawed by the Government for being incendiary. Christian leaders reportedly have used the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassies in Dar Es Salaam and Nairobi, Kenya, as a justification to criticize Muslims.

There are signs of increasing tension between secular and fundamentalist Muslims, as the latter feel that the former have sold out to the Government. The fundamentalist Muslims accuse the Government of being a Christian institution, and Muslims in power as being only interested in safeguarding their positions. In these circles, secular Muslims who drink alcohol or marry Christian women are criticized severely. Muslim fundamentalists attempted, unsuccessfully, to introduce Muslim traditional dress into the national school system. Fundamentalist groups also have exhorted their followers to vote only for Muslim candidates.

During the period covered by this report, there have been two seminars sponsored by local nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) that sought to address divisions between Christians and Muslims. Prof. Rweikaza Mukandala, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Dar es Salaam, said his organization, Research, Education and Democracy in Tanzania (REDET), was conducting a country-wide study of Muslim claims that they are being discriminated against in educational and employment opportunities. The study, which also assesses the overall relationship between the Christian community and their Muslim counterparts, should be completed in August 2000. Mukandala said the University decided to undertake this study due to the belief that religion again would be a contentious issue during the October 2000 elections.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## TOGO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government establishes requirements for recognition of religious organizations outside the three main faiths—Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. Applications must be submitted to the Interior Ministry's Division of Civil Security. A religious organization must submit its statutes, a statement of doctrine, bylaws, names and addresses of executive board members, the pastor's diploma, contract, a site map, and a description of its financial situation. There are no special requirements for foreign missionary groups. The Interior Ministry issues official recognition. The Civil Security Division also has enforcement responsibilities when there are problems or complaints associated with a religious organization.

Official recognition of religious organizations has created a dilemma for the Government over the years. In the 1970's, the Government clamped down on cults and dubious religious associations, citing national security concerns. Many of the dozens of organizations that presented their credentials were run by persons from other

West African countries, principally Nigeria, who were in the country without a valid residence permit. Official recognition was extended only to the Catholic Church, Muslims, and most Protestant churches, including the Assemblies of God, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Baptists.

In the early 1990's, the concepts of democracy and liberty encouraged a proliferation of religious groups, which began to seek recognition. Cases of individuals who used religion as a cover for other activities also increased. At the same time, advocates for religious freedom demanded more tolerance and protection for people of all faiths. At the urging of the Togolese Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty (ATDLR), which was founded in 1991, the Government adopted a more liberal approach; however, the Government concluded that the rise of cults and dubious religious associations was again a problem. In 1995, the last year for which statistics are available, the Government recognized only 71 of the 198 groups that applied for official recognition during that year. It is believed that the others continued to operate in clandestine fashion. These unregistered groups are mostly little known groups within the major religions.

In 1997 the ATDLR submitted to the National Assembly a proposed law designed to address the full range of issues pertaining to religious freedom, including recognition, operating regulations, and penalties for those who restricted the rights of others to worship freely. The National Assembly has not yet taken action on the proposed ATDLR law, nor is it likely to do so, in view of the basic constitutional provision for freedom of religion. Scores of applications for recognition await adjudication at the Ministry of Interior while authorities investigate the bona fides of each organization. In the meantime, these groups practice their faith.

#### *Religious Demography*

According to statistics published by the Ministry of Tourism, the population is approximately 22 percent Catholic, 12 percent Sunni Muslim, and 7 percent Protestant. The remaining 59 percent of the population consist of followers of other faiths, including traditional indigenous religions. Many converts to the larger faiths continue to practice some rituals of traditional indigenous religions. Most Muslims live in the central and northern regions.

Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools are common.

Missionary groups represent Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam.

In January 2000, as in past years, President Eyadema, a Protestant, invited Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant religious leaders to an ecumenical prayer service to commemorate the anniversary of his military takeover. For the second year in a row, the Catholic Church declined the invitation to attend the "Day of National Liberation" service, stating that it is inappropriate to hold a worship service in a government building. In addition, under the leadership of the Archbishop of Lome, the Catholic Church continues to refrain from delivering political sermons praising President Eyadema. The Archbishop's predecessor had used the pulpit to praise the President, but such sermons alienated the congregation, which called for the Archbishop's dismissal.

The 17-member National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) elected by the National Assembly includes Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant representatives. The CNDH hears appeals by religious organizations that the Government has disallowed principally for disturbing the peace.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Constitution prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion and states explicitly that "no political party should identify itself with a region, an ethnic group, or a religion." Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims occupy positions of authority in local and the central government.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable. The Christian Council was founded in 1978 to address common issues among Protestant denominations. The Council comprises the Assemblies of God, Protestant Methodist, the Baptist Convention, Pentecostal churches, Seventh-Day Adventist, Lutheran, and



Evangelical Presbyterian denominations. The Council continues to debate whether to expand its membership to include other Protestant organizations. A program for Islamic-Christian relations attempts to foster understanding between the two religions. Catholics and Protestants collaborate frequently through the Biblical Alliance. Members of different faiths regularly invite one another to their respective ceremonies. Intermarriage across religious lines is common.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. In addition, the Embassy facilitated a meeting between the head of the ATDLR and the U.S. State Department's Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom in the fall of 1999. This meeting focused on the efforts of the ATDLR to establish a headquarters in Lome and to further their efforts to promote religious freedom in the West Africa region.

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## UGANDA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government forcibly disbanded several religious groups.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Complaints by Muslim groups of government bias lessened.

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities and no religious group actively impinges upon the right of others to worship; however, the backlash from the death of over 1,000 citizens at the hands of a religious group has resulted in negative public attitudes towards Christian groups that are viewed as cults.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government forcibly disbanded several religious groups.

All religious organizations are required to register with the Nongovernmental Organizations Board. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such registration to any religious organization.

Permits are also necessary for the construction of facilities, including religious facilities. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such permits to any religious organization.

In the wake of discoveries in March, April, and May 2000 that over 1,000 citizens had been killed by members of a religious group, several religious organizations were disbanded forcibly. In early April 2000, following allegations that the church allowed youths to engage in sexual relationships, the deputy resident district commissioner closed the Revival Pentecostal Church in Nseko village, Kasangati. In mid-April, police in Kasese district banned the activities of a church group based in Hima public school, Busongora. On May 19, the Bushenyi resident district commissioner ordered the closure of the Church of the Servants of the Eucharistic Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which allegedly was operating in the guise of a vocational school.

#### *Religious Demography*

Christianity is the majority religion, and its adherents constitute approximately 66 percent of the population. Muslims account for approximately 16 percent of the population. A variety of other religions, including traditional indigenous religions, Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, and Judaism, are practiced freely and, combined, make up about 18 percent of the population. Among the Christian groups, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches claim approximately the same number of followers, accounting for perhaps 95 percent of the nation's professed Christians. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baptist Church, the Unification Church, and the Pentecostal Church, among others, are active. Muslims are mainly Sunni, although there are also Shi'a

followers of the Aga Khan among the Asian community. Several branches of Hinduism are represented. Atheism is negligible.

In many areas, particularly in rural settings, some religions tend to be syncretistic. Deeply held traditional indigenous beliefs commonly are blended into established religious rites or observed alongside such rites, particularly in areas which are predominantly Christian.

Missionary groups of several denominations are present and active in the country, and face no particular restrictions on their activity. Foreign missionary groups, like foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), must register with the Government. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant registration to any foreign missionary groups.

Muslims and adherents of other minority religions occupy positions of authority in local and central government.

Private Koranic and Christian schools are common. There is no religious instruction in public schools.

Prisoners are given the opportunity to pray on days appropriate to their faith. Muslim prisoners usually are released from work duties during the month of Ramadan.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Some local governments have restricted the hours of operations of religious organizations that are viewed as cults, for example, prohibiting nighttime prayer meetings. The Government has largely ignored calls for these churches to be shut down and their followers returned to mainstream churches.

Local officials have dispersed meetings of religious groups. For example, on March 12, 2000, security operatives in Mbale dispersed hundreds of people who had gathered for an evangelistic event organized by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. On March 19, police in Kikinzi, Rukungiri district, dispersed a baptism organized by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. On March 28, police in Mukono town dispersed a meeting of over 200 adherents of the Universal Apostolic Church for the Restless. On April 1, police dispersed an alleged "cult" gathering in Kikandwa, Mubende district.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

During the period covered by this report, there was a decrease in complaints by Muslim groups of government mistreatment and bias. The Government's relationship with the Islamic community improved significantly following the release in March 2000 of 56 members of the Muslim Tabliq group who were accused of treason.

Following the murder on March 16, 2000 of more than 500 followers of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God and the discovery of mass graves of approximately 500 other persons on properties belonging to the group, the Government launched investigations of numerous religious groups. Three groups were disbanded forcibly and one religious leader was arrested. On March 29, 2000, former Rukungiri assistant resident district commissioner (ARDC) Rev. Francis Mutazindwa was arrested for failing to act on information about the activities of the Kanungu cult while he was the ARDC. He was released on bond in early May, pending further investigation.

On May 2, five members of the Kisaaba Redeemed Church in Kayunga, Mukono district—Benon Kaye, Monica Isabirye, Eseza Kisakye Lukwago, Catherine Nagujja, and Willinstone Nagenda—were arrested and charged with causing the death of a church member by denying him medical treatment. Kaye and Isabirye were released on bail, and the other members were freed.

On May 30, five members of the Mulungumu Full Gospel Church in Luweero—John Mwebaza, Florence Mirembe, Fred Mwesigwa, Sarah Mugabi, and Geoffrey Beyongera—were arrested after reportedly telling their followers to fast and sell their property. The five remained in custody at Luzira prison at mid-2000.

Complaints by Muslim groups of government bias lessened during the period covered by this report; however, the backlash from the death of over 1,000 citizens at the hands of a religious cult resulted in negative public attitudes towards fringe Christian groups and the Government's forcible disbanding of some groups.

In 1998 approximately 100 Muslim men were detained and some were tortured, on suspicion that they supported rebel groups. Many of those detained were released, but the whereabouts of some remained unknown. There was no clear indication that religion was the sole factor in their arrests. The release of the 56 Tabliq prisoners in March 2000 resolved the issue of the unaccounted whereabouts of the Muslim prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and no religious group actively impinges upon the right of others to worship. However, the backlash from the death of over 1,000 citizens at the hands of a religious group resulted in negative public attitudes towards fringe Christian groups. Some officials of "mainstream" Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim religious organizations have called for the closure of Christian churches, which are viewed as cults.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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# ZAMBIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

A 1996 amendment to the Constitution declared the country a Christian nation while providing for freedom of religion in practice. The Government respects the right of all faiths to worship freely.

There are governmental controls that require the registration of religious groups. The Government approves all applications for registration from religious groups without discrimination. There were no reports that the Government rejected any religious groups that attempted to register or obtain licenses.

### *Religious Demography*

Approximately 85 percent of the population are Christian; 5 percent are Muslim; 5 percent adhere to other faiths, including Hinduism and the Baha'i Faith; and 5 percent are atheist.

The Christian faith was introduced by foreign missionary groups in the 1890's. The majority of indigenous persons, spread throughout the country, are either Roman Catholic or Protestant. Currently, there is an upsurge of new Pentecostal churches, commonly known as the "born again" churches, which have attracted many young persons into their ranks.

Muslims are concentrated in certain parts of the country where citizens of Asian origin have settled along the railroad line from Lusaka to Livingstone, in Chipata, and in the eastern province. Most citizens of Asian origin are Muslims, although Hindus constitute a small percentage. A limited number of indigenous persons are also Muslim.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country and include the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Church of God. There were no reports that these missionary groups faced any special requirements or restrictions.

There were no reports of complaints by the Muslim community of discrimination during the period covered by this report.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Such instruction is conducted in the dominant Christian religion. Religious instruction in Islam and other faiths is conducted in private schools owned and controlled by those faiths. Some religious organizations operate radio stations and television networks.

In December 1996, the Government established an office for religious affairs at the level of deputy minister in the President's Office at State House. The office is responsible for dealing with issues that pertain to religion and worship, and to the promotion of state-church understanding and inter-faith dialog.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities.

Leaders of various ecumenical movements, namely, the Zambia Episcopal Conference, the Christian Council of Zambia, and the Evangelical Foundation of Zambia hold regular meetings to promote mutual understanding and inter-faith dialog, and to discuss national issues.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## ZIMBABWE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a law that reportedly criminalizes both purporting to practice witchcraft and accusing persons of practicing witchcraft reportedly was viewed as restrictive by some practitioners of indigenous religions. There is no state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities. The Government and the religious community in the country historically have had good relations.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a law that reportedly criminalizes both purporting to practice witchcraft and accusing persons of practicing witchcraft reportedly was viewed as restrictive by some practitioners of indigenous religions. There is no state religion. The Government generally recognizes all religions.

The Government does not require religious institutions to be registered. However, approximately 3 years ago the Office of the Registrar General considered whether to register such institutions and enforce a code of conduct because it became concerned with the growing number of religious schools, hospitals, and clinics that lacked internal controls. To date, no formal registration process has been put in place. However, religious organizations that run schools or medical facilities must register those specific institutions with the appropriate ministry involved in regulating those areas. Similarly, religious institutions may apply for tax-exempt status and duty-free privileges with the Customs Department, which generally grants it.

#### *Religious Demography*

There is no state religion, but between 60 and 70 percent of an estimated population of 13 million belong to the mainstream Christian denominations, with between 2-3 million identifying themselves as Roman Catholic. However, there are no

reliable statistics on the exact number of Christian churches or religious movements in the country. There is also a small Muslim population in the country, estimated at less than 1 percent. The evangelical denominations, mostly Pentecostal churches, are the fastest growing congregation in the country. They appeal to large numbers of disillusioned members from the established churches who reportedly are attracted by these church leaders' promises of miracles and messages of hope at a time of social and economic stress. The remainder of the population consists of Greek Orthodox, Jews, practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, indigenous syncretistic African religions that mix Christianity and traditional African culture and beliefs, a small number of Hindus, Buddhists, and atheists.

The dominance of Christianity dates to the early contact of Portuguese traders and Jesuit priests with Africans in the region in the late 1500's. The Jesuits established churches and educational institutions in the Zambezi Valley. Several centuries later Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Dutch Reformed, and Salvation Army missionaries began to aggressively compete for territorial and spiritual monopolies throughout the country, resulting in "areas of interest" for each of these churches. Today, many persons identify with the Christian denomination that had the longest historical connection to their area. President Robert Mugabe is a Roman Catholic who professes to practice his faith actively, and many of those who make up the elite of society tend to be associated with one of the established Christian churches.

Due to its colonial and apartheid-like history, the vast majority of the country's black population was prevented from attending government schools, which were restricted to white students, and Christian mission schools taught the few blacks who could claim any formal education at all. Consequently, the vast majority of the country's liberation war leadership, who later became the current Government's senior officials, were trained by Christian educators.

The Muslim community consists primarily of South Asian immigrants (Indian and Pakistani), migrants from other southern and eastern African countries (Mozambique and Malawi), and a very small number of North African and Middle Eastern immigrants. There are mosques located in several large urban areas and a tiny number in rural areas. There are 12 mosques in the capital Harare. The Muslim community generally has been very insular. However, in recent years, the Islamic community has begun proselytizing among the majority black indigenous population with increasing success.

The indigenous African churches combine elements of established Christian beliefs with some beliefs based on traditional African culture and religion. These churches tend to be centered on a prophetic figure, with members of the congregation identifying themselves as "apostles." These church members wear long white robes and head coverings. Many of these churches date back to the early 1920's, when there was widespread racial and religious segregation. Many of the founders of African indigenous churches broke away from Christian missionary churches, and some of their teachings incorporate what has become known as "black consciousness." To a large extent, these churches grew out of the Christian churches' failure to adapt to traditional African culture and religion. A notable feature of the indigenous churches is the acceptance and promotion of polygamy. These indigenous churches have proliferated as a result of splits among the followers of the different "prophets."

Many persons continue to believe, in varying degrees, in traditional indigenous religions. These persons may attend worship in a westernized Christian church on Sundays but consult with traditional healers during the week. Belief in traditional healers spans both the rural and urban areas. Traditional healers are so common that they are licensed and regulated by the Zimbabwe National African Traditional Healers' Association (ZINATHA). Traditional African religions remain deeply rooted and are expected to grow as people seek spiritual comfort from the country's economic hardships and the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Government permits religious education in private schools. The country has had a long history of Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist primary and secondary schools. Since independence there also has been a proliferation of evangelical basic education schools. The Christian schools constitute one third of the total number of the schools in the country with the Catholic Church having the majority. Due to inadequate resources, the Government has returned several former church schools, which it had taken over at independence, to the respective churches in the last few years. There are Islamic and Hebrew primary, secondary, and high schools in the major urban areas. In addition, there are several institutions of higher education that include religious studies as a core component of the curriculum. There are two such institutions in Harare—the Catholic University and Arrupe College. There is one Methodist institution in Mutare, the Africa University, and a Seventh-Day Adventist college in Matebeleland. The state-supported University of Zimbabwe also

has a Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, which has a multid denominational curriculum and faculty. All these institutions have a religiously mixed student body. In addition, there are some non-degree bearing institutions such as teacher training colleges that also focus on religious studies.

Christian missions provided the first hospitals to care for black citizens. Presently there are 123 hospitals and clinics in the country that fall under the Zimbabwe Association of Christian Hospitals, an association that consists of largely mainstream churches. The individual churches are the predominant source of funding for maintaining these hospitals because of the Government's increasing inability to provide essential services. The Government does provide small subsidies to facilitate the hospitals' functions, but these make up only a small percentage of the operating budgets.

#### *Governmental Restrictions in Religious Freedom*

Witchcraft—widely understood to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons—traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown. Although traditional indigenous religions generally include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it. In recent years, interest in healing through traditional religion and through prayer reportedly has increased as HIV/AIDS has infected an estimated one-quarter of the adult population, and affordable science-based medicines effective in treating HIV/AIDS have remained unavailable.

The 1890 Witchcraft Suppression Act (WSA) reportedly criminalizes purporting to practice witchcraft, accusing persons of practicing witchcraft, hunting witches, and soliciting persons to name witches; penalties reportedly include imprisonment for as much as 7 years. The law reportedly defines witchcraft as the practice of sorcery, without reference to the consequences intended by the practitioner. Since 1997 the Zimbabwe National African Traditional Healers' Association has proposed amendments to the 1890 law that would redefine witchcraft in terms of intent to cause harm including illness, injury, or death. However, mainstream Christian churches reportedly have opposed such legislation. Human rights groups also generally supported the existing WSA; the Act has been used since independence primarily to protect people, primarily women, who have been accused falsely of causing harm to people or crops in rural areas where traditional religious practices are strong.

There is some tension between the Government and the indigenous African churches because of the latter's opposition to Western medical practices that result in the reduction of avoidable childhood diseases and deaths in those communities. Some members of the indigenous churches believe in healing through prayer only and refuse to have their children vaccinated. The Ministry of Health has had limited success only in vaccinating children in these religious communities against communicable childhood diseases. Human rights activists also have criticized these indigenous churches for their sanctioning of marriages for underage girls.

President Mugabe has expressed skepticism about the increasing membership in evangelical and indigenous churches and has indicated that he believes they could be subversive.

The Government maintains a monopoly on television broadcasting (despite some restricted leased broadcast time to one other broadcaster) through the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). The Government permits limited religious broadcasting on ZBC and advertising in the government-influenced press by the older, established Christian churches, as well as new evangelical churches and institutions, such as The 700 Club and World Vision. Programming produced by the U.S.-based Christian Broadcasting Network is shown on ZBC. The Government generally follows the recommendations of the Religious Advisory Board, an umbrella grouping of Christian denominations, on appropriate religious material to broadcast. Muslims, who are not represented on the board, approached the advisory board about obtaining access to the airwaves. The Roman Catholic chairman of the board is not opposed to recommending that Muslims be given air time commensurate with their numbers in the country, as long as other religions are not denigrated in the material presented. However, the chairman acknowledged that other evangelical church groups are more hostile to Islam and are unlikely to support the inclusion of Islamic programming in the already limited religious broadcasting block. While the ZBC officials with whom the chairman raised this issue in the past had indicated informally that Islamic religious material would be included on ZBC; none has been broadcast to date. The chairman of the Religious Advisory Board believes that this is because Muslims represent too small a percentage of society to take up minimal religious airtime or to merit membership on the advisory board.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities. The Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist religious communities are relatively small and generally not in competition with Christian denominations for converts. Catholic Church officials say they welcome inter-faith dialog with Muslims but believe some of the evangelical churches are hostile to Islam.

There are at least four umbrella religious organizations primarily focused on interdenominational dialog among Christians, and some intrareligious activities. However, Muslims are not represented in any of these organizations, and there is no vehicle for formal Christian-Muslim dialog. Muslims have complained of discrimination by private employers who refuse to allow them sufficient time to worship at their mosques on Fridays.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) is an umbrella organization of all non-Catholic ecumenical Christian missionary churches, but does not include evangelical organizations. It maintains a secretariat in Harare, conducts development programs, has a Justice and Peace desk, and collaborates with the much older Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJP). The Catholic Church has observer status within the ZCC and relations generally are cooperative. The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference currently is deliberating over whether to seek membership in the ZCC. Some members of the Christian community are hesitant to support Catholics joining the ZCC because of memories of the inability of religious leaders to work together during the liberation-war era and fear a repeat of that experience. The ZCC also has worked with other church groups and civil society organizations on social issues. The ZCC initially provided a secretariat for the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a respected nongovernmental organization formed to create a new constitution. After about a 2-year collaboration, the ZCC withdrew from the NCA over political direction and leadership style differences, although individual churches subsequently rejoined. The ZCC generally is seen as supportive of President Mugabe and unwilling to criticize the President or his Government. However, a rift between the ZCC and the Government emerged when the ZCC and NCA tried to bring together the different parties working on election issues and the Government refused to participate, branding the ZCC as the enemy.

The Heads of Denominations (HOD) is a pragmatic association of Catholic and other Christian denominations that has no spiritual or theological emphasis. It was created to enable collaboration among Christian groups and the Government in the running of religious schools and hospitals. The HOD provides a vehicle for Christian churches to speak to the Government with a common voice on policy issues and includes the Catholic Church, which runs a significant number of the rural hospitals and schools in the country. The HOD has a loose structure and no office. At present, the HOD's secretarial support is provided by the general secretariat of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), and its secretary general holds the same position in the ZCBC. The education secretaries of the various churches work together under the HOD, as does the religious advisory board to the ZBC. This broad grouping of churches under the HOD also collaborate on a wide range of social issues including HIV/AIDS education and, in conjunction with the ZCC, the Christian churches have addressed the declining economic conditions affecting their members across the country. In 1999 HOD issued a joint statement calling for HIV/AIDS to be treated as a moral issue. The HOD continues to deliberate over the role religious institutions should play in combating the HIV/AIDS crisis. In addition the Catholic Church and other religious and lay persons run a center for HIV/AIDS affected persons called "Mashambanzou" in Harare.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) is another umbrella organization of loosely affiliated evangelical churches that was established in the early 1980's. The fellowship has observer status with the HOD but does not work closely with either the ZCC or Catholic Church. However, the evangelical and Catholic churches do collaborate in the broadcasting of religious programs.

Fambidzozo, which means "walking together," is a relatively new grouping of the indigenous African churches. A South African Dutch Reformed Church theologian

and social anthropologist, Inus Daneel, who has researched these churches in South Africa and Zimbabwe, founded the organization in the mid-1970's. Fambidzano was created to give the leaders of these churches more theological and biblical education, according to Daneel. There is little dialog between Fambidzano and the Catholic Church. However, the two organizations are discussing the need to work with the indigenous churches to which many persons are turning because of their emphasis on physical healing and spiritual salvation.

ZINATHA is the closest thing to an organized representative body for traditional African religion. The head of that organization is a university professor and vocal Anglican who is working to increase intrareligious dialog between ZINATHA and mainstream Christian churches.

One area of ecumenical collaboration has been translation of the Bible into the majority language, Shona. For the past 13 years, several priests and ministers have worked on this project, which they hope to complete by the end of 2000.

During the February 2000 constitutional referendum, more than 150 of these under the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) lobbied for Christianity to be enshrined in the new constitution as the country's sole national religion. That position was rejected, primarily because its opponents argued that Christianity had brought about colonization in Africa.

There were reports of growing tensions between mainstream Christian churches and practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Leaders of the Christian churches reportedly opposed the repeal or modification of the Witchcraft Suppression Act sought by practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Several leaders of Christian churches reportedly criticized a perceived increase in "Satanism" in the country; acts of Satanism allegedly included drinking human blood and eating human flesh.

There were increasing reports of ritual murders associated with traditional religious practices, although the Government actively enforces the law against all kinds of murder including ritual murders. Gordon Chavanduka, chairman of ZINATHA, the national association of traditional healers, reportedly has stated that black-market demand for human body parts used in making potions has increased greatly in recent years. Some observers suggested that this development might be associated with the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country, and the lack of affordable science-based medicines for treating infected persons. There were increasingly frequent reports that persons killed children for body parts practicing healing rituals associated with traditional religions. In July 1999, Faber Chidarikire, a Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front official and mayor of the northern town of Chinhoyi, was charged with murdering a 13-year-old girl in 1987, but he was released on bail after intervention by the Attorney General; there were reports that Chidarikire cut off the girl's ear and excised her genitals. In 1995 an examination of a severed head found in Chidarikire's car in 1994 indicated that it had been severed with a blade, not in a car accident as Chidarikire had maintained.

Several key church leaders and organizations strongly criticized the apparently state-sanctioned politically motivated crimes and violence during the period prior to the June parliamentary elections, and urged the Government to restore peace in the country. A Catholic clergyman, Father Fidelis Mukonori, was engaged publicly in an effort to find a negotiated solution to the occupations by commercial farms by war veterans, and he helped facilitate meetings between both sides and with President Mugabe. The Catholic Bishops Conference also has met with President Mugabe and expressed its concerns about the prevailing violence in the country. The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches also have written public letters to the President expressing concern about the violence and have held meetings with Police Commissioner, Augustine Chihuri, urging him to restore order. Many churches have organized peace marches and prayer vigils.

Some clergymen criticized the Government vigorously for its involvement in orchestrating the political violence. In April 2000, Anglican priest Tim Neil of Harare publicly chastised President Mugabe for condoning commercial farm invasions. Father Neil distributed pamphlets at his Harare parish that questioned the President's legitimacy to remain in office in light of the chaos he said Mugabe had caused in the country. Father Neil subsequently received a death threat letter signed by the secretary general of the Revival of African Conscience, Ngonidzashe Mutasa, a previously unknown organization with no established following or platform. The police later apprehended Mutasa, and his case is pending. The Bulawayo Catholic Archbishop, Pius Ncube, wrote public letters accusing the Government of fueling the violence and urging citizens to exercise their vote. Government supporters attacked several church workers accusing them of backing the opposition in their areas.



## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government supports religious and other constitutionally protected freedoms through demarches to the Government, nondenominational financial support for community development projects (which often are associated with religious institutions), and regular dialog with and support for civil society organizations that advocate and monitor respect for human rights, including freedom of religion.



# **LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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## **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change to the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### **SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION**

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

#### *Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Anglican, Methodist, Moravian, and Roman Catholic) but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. The minority religions are Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and Rastafarianism.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any steps to promote inter-faith understanding but also does not monitor or discriminate according to religious faith.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

There were no confirmed reports that the Government abused religious freedom; however, members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them. However, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect discrimination on the basis of religious belief by authorities or simply enforcement of laws against marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practice.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### **SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES**

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Antigua Christian Council, an interdenominational group, conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

### **SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY**

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have discussed issues or events relating to religious freedom with government officials when soliciting support for international organization resolutions concerning religious freedom.

## ARGENTINA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Constitution states that the Federal Government “sustains the apostolic Roman Catholic faith;” however, other religious faiths are practiced freely.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. However, anti-Semitic incidents continue to occur.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by Government or private actors. The Constitution grants to all residents the right “freely to profess their faith,” and also states that aliens enjoy all the civil rights of citizens, including the right “freely to exercise their faith.”

The Constitution states that the federal government “sustains the apostolic Roman Catholic faith.” The Government provides the Catholic Church with a variety of subsidies totaling \$8 million (8 million pesos), administered through the Secretariat of Worship. The Secretariat is responsible for conducting the Government’s relations with the Catholic Church, the nonCatholic Christian churches, and other religious organizations in the country. The Secretariat was transferred from the Office of the Presidency to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade, and Worship following the inauguration of President Fernando de la Rúa in December 1999. A requirement that the President of the country be Catholic was removed when the Constitution was amended in 1994.

The Secretariat of Worship maintains a National Registry of approximately 2,800 religious organizations representing some 30 churches, including most of the world’s major faiths. Religious organizations that wish to hold public worship services and to obtain tax-exempt status must register with the Secretariat, and must report periodically to the Secretariat in order to retain their status. Possession of a place of worship, an organizational charter, and an ordained clergy are among the criteria the Secretariat considers in determining whether to grant or withdraw registration.

#### *Religious Demography*

The majority of citizens are Catholic, but the Government has no accurate statistics on the number of members that belong to the Catholic Church and the other registered churches. The national census does not elicit information on religious affiliation. According to an article published in the mass-circulation magazine *Gente* in March 1999, estimates for the religious affiliations of citizens included the Roman Catholic Church, which claims 25,000,000 baptized members (approximately 70 percent of the population). According to the article, approximately 2,900,000 citizens, or about 8 percent of the population are believed to be evangelical Protestants (of which 70 percent are Pentecostal). There are approximately 800,000 Muslims, 250,000 Jews, 100,000 Apostolic Armenian Orthodox, and 4,000 Anglicans in the country. These statistics are not necessarily authoritative. The figure for Muslims, for example, has been disputed as far too high, probably representing persons of Middle Eastern ethnic origins, many of whom actually do not profess the Muslim faith. One prominent local historian put the actual number of practicing Muslims at closer to 15,000. However, a November 1999 article concerning the construction of a new Muslim “megacenter” in Buenos Aires cited an even greater number of Muslims—900,000. (In the case of the number of Armenian Orthodox, the same historian also disputed the *Gente* figure as being approximately four times too high.)

The Secretariat of Worship promotes religious pluralism through such activities as conferences at which representatives of the various churches meet to discuss current issues. Leaders of the non-Catholic churches are invited regularly to attend the *Te Deum* Mass celebrated in the Metropolitan Cathedral on important national holidays. In 1995 a law was passed acknowledging the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) as holidays; however, the law does not require employers to compensate Jewish employees who choose to take these days off. The Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations (*Delegación de*

Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas—DAIA), which represents the Jewish community, is seeking to have these days declared as national holidays.

In January 2000, President De la Rúa committed the Government to implementing a Holocaust Education Project carried out under the auspices of the International Holocaust Education Task Force.

Registered religious organizations may bring foreign missionaries to the country by applying to the Secretariat of Worship, which in turn notifies the immigration authorities so that the appropriate immigration documents may be issued.

Public education is secular, but students may request instruction in the faith of their choice, to be carried out in the school itself or at a religious institution, as circumstances warrant. Many churches operate private schools, including seminaries and universities.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Fifteen former Buenos Aires provincial police officers have been linked to a stolen vehicle ring, which furnished the van used in the 1994 AMIA Jewish Cultural Center bombing, and face various criminal charges (see Section II). In April 2000, President De la Rúa announced the creation of a new task force of four independent prosecutors to resolve any remaining questions surrounding the AMIA bombing. During his June 2000 visit to the United States, President De la Rúa made a formal apology at the Holocaust Memorial Museum for Argentina having accepted Nazi war criminals as immigrants after World War II.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable. Inter-faith understanding is promoted actively by nongovernmental organizations such as Argentina House in Jerusalem. Ecumenical attendance is common at important religious events, such as the Jewish community's annual Holocaust commemoration. In 1997 a memorial mural to the victims of the Holocaust, the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, and the 1994 bombing of the city's Jewish Community Center (AMIA) was unveiled in the Chapel of Our Lady of Luján in the Metropolitan Cathedral in Buenos Aires. At an ecumenical service in April 2000 commemorating the 1915 massacre of Armenians, religious figures from a number of different faiths, including the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Armenian Orthodox, Muslim, Maronite, and other religions took part in conducting prayers in the Metropolitan Cathedral in Buenos Aires.

However, anti-Semitism is a problem, and combating this and other forms of intolerance is a priority for the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism (INADI), an agency of the Ministry of Interior. The Institute investigates violations of a 1988 law that prohibits discrimination based on "race, religion, nationality, ideology, political opinion, sex, economic position, social class, or physical characteristics," and carries out educational programs to promote social and cultural pluralism and combat discriminatory attitudes. However, in early 2000, INADI underwent a prolonged process of reorganization, during which its effectiveness was affected seriously.

There were a number of reports of anti-Semitic acts, of anti-Semitic violence, and of threats against Jewish organizations and individuals during the period covered by this report.

In April 1998, a court sentenced three Buenos Aires youths to 3 years in prison for a 1995 assault on a man whom they believed to be Jewish. It was the first instance of an oral trial under the 1988 antidiscrimination law. The court found that the three had acted out of "hatred due to race, religion, or nationality" and in violation of the 1988 antidiscrimination statute. They were given the maximum penalty provided by law. In February 1999, an appeals court overturned the conviction and ordered the three retried in another court. In October 1999, the Attorney General recommended to the Supreme Court that the original verdict be sustained. The Supreme Court has no set time limit within which it must render a decision. At the April 1998 sentencing, some persons in the courtroom had shouted anti-Semitic remarks. The National Institute Against Discrimination, the nongovernmental Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, and the Delegation of the Jewish-Argentine Asso-

ciations filed suit demanding that the perpetrators be identified and tried under the antidiscrimination law.

In August 1999, two Jewish families in Parana, Entre Rios province, received telephonic bomb threats, and subsequently found military-type grenades, which had to be deactivated by explosives experts.

In September 1999, a Jewish school in the locality of La Floresta was struck by bullets attributed to six unknown individuals, who fled after exchanging gunfire with a member of the Gendarmeria Nacional (border police).

On September 17–18, 1999, the eve of Yom Kippur, unknown vandals desecrated some 63 graves at the Jewish cemetery in La Tablada, Buenos Aires province. The attack resulted in unusually vehement criticism by senior government officials. Investigations continued into vandalism at Jewish cemeteries in Ciudadela (1998) and La Tablada (1997), but there have been no arrests. In October 1999, unknown individuals desecrated the graves of 11 children at the Jewish cemetery in Liniers, Buenos Aires province. There was no progress in the case where three youths were arrested for smashing tombs in a Jewish cemetery in Liniers in January 1998, or in the case of the two former Buenos Aires provincial police officers who were suspected of December 1997 attacks on two Jewish cemeteries.

In October 1999, a theater in Tucuman was evacuated during a performance of the musical “Fiddler on the Roof” due to a telephoned bomb threat. The provincial secretary of culture confirmed that the anonymous caller used anti-Semitic language during the telephone call. In December 1999, the Jewish Community Center (AMIA) (a new building replacing the one demolished by terrorist bombing in 1994) was evacuated as a result of anonymous telephone threats. No organization took responsibility for the alleged bomb. Unknown persons have made bomb threats against the center on several occasions.

In February 2000, a Jewish country club in San Miguel received bomb threats. Following an evacuation of the building, it was established that the threats were spurious.

In April 2000, several tombs were vandalized in the Jewish cemetery at Posadas, in Misiones province. Local police subsequently arrested seven adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 in connection with the crime, but the police maintained that the acts of vandalism had no religious connotations.

The investigations into the 1992 terrorist bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the 1994 bombing of the Jewish Community Center continued. On May 5, 1999, the Interior Minister called for an investigation into an audiotape that reportedly contained an order from a policeman redirecting a patrol car from the area around the Israeli Embassy just before the bombing. In May 1999, the Supreme Court (which is responsible for leading the investigation into the embassy bombing) released a report that concluded that the bombing was the result of a car bomb exploding outside the Embassy. In December 1999, the Court released a more extensive finding which encompassed the May report. The Court also formally determined that Islamic Jihad was responsible for the bombing, based on claims made by the group following the attack and on similarities with other bombings claimed by the group. In September 1999, the Court issued an international arrest warrant for Islamic Jihad leader Imad Mughniyah.

In the AMIA case, the investigating judge determined in February 1999 that there was insufficient evidence to hold Iranian Nasrim Mokhtari, long suspected of complicity in the bombing. On July 16, 1999, the Supreme Court ruled that she could leave the country. Wilson Dos Santos, who reportedly had linked Mokhtari to the bombing, again recanted his testimony from early in the year; the press reported in July 1999 that he had offered to return and testify in exchange for money. An investigator interviewed him in Brazil, evaluated the proposed testimony, and rejected his offer. In July 1999, authorities brought formal charges against all the suspects currently being held in connection with the attack, including a number of former Buenos Aires provincial police officers. Fifteen former police officers have been linked to a stolen vehicle ring, which furnished the van used in the bombing, and face various criminal charges. Also in July 1999, the judge released a public notice calling upon any and all potential witnesses to come forward. According to press reports, “Memoria Activa,” a group of some of the family members of the victims, has presented a suit before the Organization of American States Inter-American Human Rights Commission charging that the Government did not take sufficient measures to prevent the attack; that the State has not investigated the case actively; and that serious errors have occurred in the investigation. Then-Interior Minister Carlos Corach denied the charges. In late February 2000, the AMIA case was presented formally for trial. In April 2000, the De la Rúa administration—which assumed office in December 1999—created a new task force of four independent prosecutors to investigate certain areas relating to the AMIA case. In the

summer of 2000, on the sixth anniversary of the AMIA bombing, President De la Rúa and much of his cabinet attended the solemn ceremony commemorating the victims at the now-rebuilt cultural center.

In November 1999, Foreign Minister Guido di Tella announced the issuance of a report of the Government's Commission of Inquiry into the activities of Nazism in the country. The Commission was established in 1997 by President Carlos Menem. The report included a preliminary count of at least 180 "war criminals" from Germany, France, and Croatia, who entered Argentina after World War II, and identified a shipment of stolen gold from Croatia's central bank that also went to Argentina. The report also addressed the extent of Nazi influence on the country during the 1930's and 1940's.

During his June 2000 visit to the United States, President De la Rúa made a formal apology at the Holocaust Memorial Museum for Argentina having accepted Nazi war criminals as immigrants after World War II.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officers meet periodically with a variety of church leaders, invite them to embassy social functions, and attend events organized by churches and non-governmental organizations that deal with issues of religious freedom.

In October 1999, the U.S. Embassy cosponsored a special inaugural screening of the Steven Spielberg film "The Final Days," about the Holocaust in Hungary. In March 2000, the Embassy's Charge d'Affaires hosted a ceremony sponsored by Argentina House in Jerusalem and the International Raoul Wallenberg Committee, at which a sculpture honoring the memory of Raoul Wallenberg was presented to the Embassy.

In April 2000, an embassy officer attended the ecumenical ceremony commemorating the 1915 Armenian massacre, held in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Buenos Aires. In May 2000, an embassy officer attended a DAIA-sponsored ceremony commemorating the 57th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The ceremony also was attended by President De la Rúa, who made a speech in which he advocated greater respect for persons of all religions and ethnic groups.

The U.S. Embassy on an ongoing basis assists with the Government's implementation of a Holocaust Education Project carried out under the auspices of the International Holocaust Education Task Force.

## BAHAMAS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

Although there is often reference to the country's strong Christian heritage in political and public discourse, there is no established or official state religion. Clergy are trained freely in the country and the Constitution specifically forbids infringement of a person's freedom to change religion.

Churches and other religious congregations do not face any special registration requirements, although they must incorporate legally in order to purchase land. There are no legal provisions to encourage or discourage the formation of religious communities, which are required to pay the same tariffs and stamp taxes as other companies once they legally incorporate. The Government permits foreign clergy and missionaries to enter the country and to practice their religion without restriction.

#### *Religious Demography*

There are a wide variety of religious beliefs in the country. Over 90 percent of the population of 275,000 profess a religion, and anecdotal evidence suggests that most of these persons attend services on a regular basis. The country is ethnically

diverse, with a Haitian minority of as many as 40,000 persons, and a white/European minority that is nearly as large. The country's religious profile reflects this diversity. Protestant Christian denominations (including Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Evangelicals, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Salvation Army) are in the majority, but there are significant Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox populations. Smaller Jewish, Baha'i, and Muslim communities are also active. A small but stable number of citizens identify themselves as Rastafarians, while some members of the country's small resident Guyanese and Indian populations practice Hinduism and other South Asian religions. Although many unaffiliated Protestant congregations are almost exclusively black, most mainstream churches are integrated racially. The Government meets regularly with religious leaders, both publicly and privately, to discuss social, political, and economic issues.

Religion is recognized as an academic subject at government schools and is included in mandatory standardized achievement and certificate tests for all students. The country's Christian heritage has a heavy influence on religion classes in government-supported schools, which focus on the study of Christian philosophy, biblical texts, and to a much lesser extent, comparative and non-Christian religions. The Constitution allows students or their guardians in the case of minors to opt out of religious education and observance in schools, and this right—although rarely exercised—is respected in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious congregations are generally harmonious. There were no reports of religiously motivated violence or discrimination against members of religious minorities in the period covered by this report.

There are several interdenominational organizations and ecumenical movements. These groups freely express their opinions on social, political, and economic issues.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy engages the Government on a wide range of human rights issues and concerns, including the issue of religious freedom. The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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# BARBADOS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

### *Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Anglican, Methodist, evangelical, and Roman Catholic) but it does not adversely affect religious freedom for others. The minority religions are Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and Rastafarianism (Nyabingi school).



The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any steps to promote inter-faith understanding but also does not monitor or discriminate according to religious faith.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Barbados Christian Council and the Caribbean Conference of Churches conduct activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have discussed issues or events relating to religious freedom with government officials when soliciting support for international organization resolutions concerning religious freedom.

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## BELIZE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by the report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There is no state religion. Nevertheless, the preamble to the Constitution makes a very strong affirmation that "the nation of Belize shall be founded upon principles which acknowledge the supremacy of God."

Under the Constitution, freedom of religion is part of a broader protection—that of freedom of conscience. In addition, the Constitution provides that no one shall be compelled to take an oath that is contrary to a person's religion or belief.

There are no special registration requirements or fees for religious organizations, and legal incorporation for a religion or denomination is a simple matter. Property taxes are not levied against churches and other places of worship. However, property taxes are levied against other church-owned buildings occupied on a regular basis such as the pastor's/priest's residence.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country's population of approximately 250,000 includes a growing Mestizo population (44 percent); a diminishing Creole component (31 percent); a stable Mayan element (Ketchi Maya 4 percent; Mopan Maya 4 percent); a disputed number of Garifuna (estimates run between 7 and 10 percent); and a small number of East Indians (3 percent), Arabs, Asians, Mennonites, Northern Europeans, and immigrant Americans. Most citizens are Roman Catholic (58 percent). Even when Creoles predominated, Roman Catholicism was the principal faith. At one time, 80 percent of the population was Roman Catholic, which underlies the Church's continuing influence in society.

Despite the long period of British colonial rule, only 7 percent of the population are Anglicans. Another 6 percent are Pentecostals. Other faiths and denominations have fewer than 10,000 members. Among them are Methodists (4.2 percent), Sev-

enth-Day Adventists (4.1 percent), and Mennonites (4 percent). There are approximately 5,000 Hindus and Nazarenes and modest numbers of Baha'i, Baptists, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Muslims, Rastafarians, and Salvation Army members, all of whom are able to proselytize freely. Except for the Mennonites and Pentecostals who mostly live in the rural districts of Cayo and Orange Walk, followers of these minority faiths tend to live in Belize City. Roman Catholics are numerous throughout the country and constitute the majority faith in all but one of the country's six districts. In Belize district, Catholics hold a plurality but Anglicans constitute over 27 percent of the population. Only about 6 percent of citizens identify themselves as nonbelievers or members of no religious congregation. There were no reports of the mistreatment of atheists or agnostics.

The Constitution stipulates that religious communities may establish "places of education" and states that "no such community shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for persons of that community." Although there is no state religion, separation of church and state is ill-defined in the country's educational system, which maintains by statute a strong religious curriculum. The curriculum ties "spirituality" with social studies courses. It requires in both public and private schools that primary school students, from kindergarten through sixth grade, receive 220 minutes of religious instruction and chapel every week. However, schoolexit exams do not have a section on religion. There are efforts underway to lessen the religious component of the school day, but most citizens likely would object to a strictly secular school day. Roman Catholic holy days are routinely school holidays. However, the Constitution forbids any educational institution from compelling a child to receive religious instruction or attend any religious ceremony or observance without his consent or, if under the age of 18, the consent of the child's parents. This constitutional safeguard is particularly important because most of the country's primary and elementary schools, high schools, and colleges are churchaffiliated.

The Constitution also stipulates that no one shall be required to receive religious instruction or attend services without their consent while serving in the armed forces or detained in prison or in any corrective institution.

In order to help maintain religious harmony, the Constitution reserves the right of the Government to intervene in religious matters "for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of other persons," including the right to observe and practice any religion "without the unsolicited intervention of members of any other religion."

Under the country's newly revised immigration and nationality act, foreign religious workers are permitted to enter the country and proselytize; however, they must be registered and purchase a religious worker's permit. The yearly fee is modest. There is a steady stream of religious workers and missionaries from the United States to Belize. Besides preaching, these visitors are involved in building and/or renovating schools and churches, providing free medical and dental care, and distributing donated food, clothing, and home fixtures.

Clergy preach, teach, and train freely.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who were abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the faiths are harmonious. Religious groups occasionally join forces in ecumenical efforts to distribute goods to the needy, clean up neighborhoods, alert the public to the dangers of sexual promiscuity, fight crime, protect children, and carry out similar endeavors.

Extortion attempts have been made against Mennonite communities; however, these incidents do not appear to have been due to the religion of the victims. The motive for targeting Mennonites seems to be monetary because some are very prosperous by the country's standards.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## BOLIVIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Roman Catholicism is the official religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. Roman Catholicism predominates, and the Constitution recognizes it as the official religion. The Roman Catholic Church receives support from the State (about 300 priests receive small stipends from the State) and exercises a limited degree of political influence through the Bolivian Bishops' Conference.

In February 2000, a draft supreme decree (similar to an executive order) governing the relationships between religious organizations and the Government was submitted to President Hugo Banzer Suarez for his signature. The draft updates a similar decree dating from 1985, which has been the subject of criticism by Catholic and non-Catholic churches. The new decree reflects input from the churches, and, according to government authorities, is designed to increase transparency and dialog in church-state relations. For example, under the 1985 decree, evangelical groups must receive permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before conducting public gatherings such as outdoor celebrations; the new decree requires only that groups consult civil authorities to address concerns such as traffic. The draft decree requires that the fundraising reports of religions be certified by a notary public. This new requirement is designed to protect churches against allegations of money laundering or receiving money from drug funds.

Non-Catholic religious organizations, including missionary groups, must register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, and receive authorization ("personeria juridica") for legal religious representation. The Ministry has not disallowed any registrations by missionary groups or other religious organizations. Religious groups receiving funds from abroad may enter into a framework agreement ("convenio marco") with the Government, lasting 3 years, which permits them to enjoy a judicial standing similar to the standing of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) and to have tax-free status. Some 20 religious groups, including the Catholic Church, have this framework agreement with the Government.

Hari Krishna is in the process of applying for registration as a religious organization. Hari Krishna previously had registered as an educational organization instead of as a religious organization. The Government sought to expel Hari Krishna from the country in the mid-1980's; however, the attempt failed when the Supreme Court declared it illegal.

#### *Religious Demography*

Roman Catholics constitute the majority (estimated at 80 percent) of the population. There are approximately 266 registered religious groups, mostly Protestant; another approximately 130 applications are pending.

Many of these 266 groups are missionary groups. They include Mennonites, Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and many evangelical groups. Most can be characterized as Christian minority religious groups rather than separate religions.

Many church representatives from other countries play a major role in the country. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) has inaugurated a temple/center in Cochabamba for its activities in western South America. There is also a small Jewish community with a synagogue in La Paz, and a few Muslims and a mosque in the eastern city of Santa Cruz. Korean immigrants have their own church in La Paz. The majority of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants have settled in the city of Santa Cruz where they have established communities. There is a university in the city founded by Korean immigrants, which has evangelical/Presbyterian ties. There are Buddhist and Shinto communities, as well as a considerable Baha'i community spread throughout the country.

The Roman Catholic Church is weaker in the countryside than in the cities; according to senior Church authorities, this is due to a lack of resources. Thus, traditional religious practices of the Aymara and Quechua Indians continue to have their

place in indigenous beliefs and rituals, with a focus on the “Pachamama” or “Mother Earth” figure, as well as on “Akeko,” originally an indigenous god of luck, harvests, and general abundance, whose festival is celebrated widely on January 24. Many native superstitions continue to flourish.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Only Catholic religious instruction is provided in public schools. Non-Catholic instruction is not yet available in public schools for students of other faiths; an alternate course on “ethics” is planned but has not yet been implemented.

In August 1999, the Unification Church complained of ongoing harassment by the Government, specifically citing the August 1998 revocation of three civil registrations for church-affiliated NGO’s by the La Paz departmental government. However, the Unification Church still is registered legally as a religious organization with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship. The Unification Church participated in the discussions between religious groups and the Government to draft the new Supreme Decree.

A local mission, the Ekklesia Church, protested its investigation by the Government; however, the issue appeared to be more one of adhering to administrative and fiscal norms than a true religious matter.

The Government does not take any steps to promote inter-faith understanding. If the President goes officially to Mass, it is traditional for his Cabinet to accompany him, even though political leaders may have different religious beliefs.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the country’s diverse religious communities are amicable. In June 1999, the Catholic Church announced that it would no longer call neo-Pentecostal and evangelical churches “sects,” which increasingly has been viewed as a pejorative term, but would call them instead “religious organizations.” According to the Bolivian Bishop’s Conference, the Church considers these Pentecostal churches to have the basic foundations of Christianity. As a demonstration of improving Catholic-evangelical relations, Catholic-Pentecostal meetings were held in Ecuador in May 1997, February 1998, and May 1999.

In June 1999, a meeting was held between Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious leaders in order to initiate an inter-faith dialog in the country. The Catholics and Methodists of Cochabamba have collaborated on publications and vigils, and following the Vatican’s lead, Catholics and Lutherans in Bolivia now recognize each other’s rituals of baptism.

There are no serious rivalries between religious groups, although there were reports of some resentment of missionary groups by Roman Catholics.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights and as an independent issue. The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officers meet regularly with religious authorities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, principal religious leaders, and the Papal Nuncio.

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## BRAZIL

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion, although a natural rivalry exists among various religious groups vying for greater numbers of adherents.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. This includes a general provision for access to religious services and counsel in all civil and military establishments.

There are no registration requirements for religions or religious groups. There is no favored or state religion. All faiths are free to establish places of worship, train clergy, and proselytize, although the Government controls entry into Indian lands.

##### *Religious Demography*

Nearly all major religions and religious organizations are present in the country. The Catholic Church's National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) estimates that roughly 75 percent of the population of 160 million identify themselves as Roman Catholic, although only a small percentage of that number regularly attend Mass. Roughly 20 percent of the population identify themselves as Protestants, the majority of which are Pentecostal/evangelical. Evangelical churches have grown rapidly and have challenged the religious stronghold of the Catholic Church. An estimated 85 percent of the country's Protestants are affiliated with Pentecostal/evangelical minority religious groups. Minor denominations include the Assembly of God and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. Lutherans and Baptists make up the bulk of the remaining Protestants and are centered in the southern part of the country, where the majority of German and northern European immigrants concentrated during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Followers of African and syncretistic religions such as Candomble, Xango, Macumba, and Umbanda constitute roughly 4 percent of the population. Candomble is the predominant traditional African religion practiced among AfroBrazilians. It centers on the worship of African deities brought to the country as a result of the slave trade. Syncretistic forms of African religions that developed in the country include Xango and Macumba, which to varying degrees combine and identify indigenous animist beliefs and Catholic saints with African deities. The capital of Bahia State, Salvador, where most African slaves arrived in the country, is considered the center of Candomble and other traditional African religions. As a result of internal migration during this century, AfroBrazilian and syncretistic religions have spread throughout the country. Followers of spiritism, mainly Kardecists—followers of the doctrine transcribed by Frenchman Allan Kardec in the 19th century—constitute roughly 1 percent of the population. Many citizens worship in more than one church or participate in the rituals of more than one religion.

Sunni and Shi'a Islam are practiced predominantly by immigrants from Arab countries who have arrived in the country during the past 25 years. Shintoism is maintained to a limited degree among the JapaneseBrazilian community.

Foreign missionary groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and several evangelical organizations, operate freely throughout the country. The Government restricts the access of missionary groups to indigenous people and requires groups to seek permission from the National Indian Foundation to enter official indigenous areas.

There are no official government programs or councils to promote inter-faith dialog.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

##### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities in the country, although a natural rivalry exists among various religious groups vying for greater numbers of adherents. The influence of evangelical churches in the country is growing. There is no national ecumenical movement.

In 1999 leaders in the Jewish community expressed concern about the appearance of anti-Semitic propaganda on neo-Nazi Internet sites in Brazil during the past 3 years. Neo-Nazism appears to be a predominantly regional problem directed at Afro-

Brazilians who have immigrated into Sao Paulo and the other southern states. Jewish community activists report that, although neoNazi groups have issued threats against at least one prominent leader, they were not aware of any violent incidents directed at Jews.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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## CHILE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in the period covered by this report. The Government promoted and Congress adopted a new religious law designed to bring other religious entities closer to the legal status enjoyed by the Catholic Church; however, the Catholic Church retained an advantaged position. The new law entered into force in late March 2000.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Church and state are officially separate. However, the Catholic Church enjoys a privileged position among religions and receives preferential treatment. The Catholic Church's special legal position stems from historical factors; the Church predates the Chilean national State, and Roman Catholicism was the official state religion until promulgation of the 1925 Constitution. At the time, the Government and the Vatican agreed on an unwritten tacit concordat to govern treatment of the Church, placing it outside government regulation.

Religious faiths and related organizations must register with the Ministry of Justice as a foundation, corporation, or religiously affiliated sports club to receive tax exempt status and the right to collect funds. Groups without juridical status still may worship, but do not enjoy the tax status, fund collection rights, and other benefits that come with legal recognition. Some 800 religious faiths and related organizations are registered with the Ministry of Justice. Government refusal to register a religious group, or withdrawal of its legal status, is rare, and generally has stemmed from misuse of funds by the group or widespread criminal allegations.

The Catholic Church is not governed by the same regulations as other religions; it does not have to register with the Ministry of Justice and enjoys "public right" ("derecho publico") status. Until March 2000, the only other church body with this legal status was the Antioch Orthodox Church. "Derecho publico" status provides that a church cannot lose its juridical standing administratively; in the case of the Catholic Church, it further means that the body cannot have its status challenged at all. Until March 2000, all other religions, and groups affiliated with other religions, enjoyed "private rights" ("derecho privado"), which allowed for the lifting of status administratively. The Antioch Orthodox Church received its "derecho publico" status in the early 1970's due to a law passed during the administration of former President Salvador Allende. However, its status theoretically could be challenged in court, which is not the case with the Catholic Church.

On July 6, 1999, the Senate approved a new religious law ("ley de culto"). Approval came after the legislation was reworded to make clear that the status historically enjoyed by the Catholic Church would not be affected by the new law. The legislation entered into effect in late March 2000. Among other provisions, it bestows the same legal status ("derecho publico") that the Catholic Church previously enjoyed upon all other faiths. This removed the possibility of other faiths having their legal status challenged administratively (their status still may be challenged in court; reflecting its historical position, the legal status of the Catholic Church may not be challenged legally).

The new religion law removed the ability of the State to dissolve religious entities by decree. Instead, this only may occur after a judicial review begun by a complaint filed by the semiautonomous Council for the Defense of the State (CDE), which is the official entity charged with defense of the State's legal interests.

Some 800 religious faiths and related organizations are registered with the Ministry of Justice. Under the new religious law, the Justice Ministry cannot refuse to accept a registry petition, but it can object to the petition within 90 days on the grounds that all legal requisites to register have not been satisfied. The questioned body then has 60 days to bring itself into conformity with the objections raised by the Ministry or challenge the Ministry's observations in court. The Catholic Church does not have to be registered with the Justice Ministry.

#### *Religious Demography*

The 1992 census (the latest official figures available) placed the total population over 14 at 9,660,367. (The census does not break down religion for persons under age 14.) Of this group, 7,409,528 persons were identified as Catholic. This represents approximately 77 percent of the population over 14 years of age.

The term Evangelical in Chile is used to refer to all non-Catholic Christian churches with the exception of the Orthodox (Greek, Persian, Serbian, Armenian) Churches and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). Most Evangelicals (approximately 90 percent) are Pentecostal. The 1992 census used both "Protestant" and "Evangelical" to ask about religion, though the terms are considered interchangeable. Evangelicals totaled 1,198,385 persons, or 12 percent of the population over the age of 14. Those identifying themselves with the term Protestant accounted for 80,259 persons, less than 1 percent of the population. In the census, atheists and those "indifferent" totaled 562,285, or approximately 6 percent of the population over the age of 14. All other religions totaled 409,910 persons, or slightly over 4 percent.

In 1997 spokespersons for Protestant organizations estimated the number of evangelical Christians in the country at between 1.8 and 2 million persons. Other estimates were as high as 3 million. The active Jewish population is estimated to be around 30,000. The number of Protestants has grown steadily with each census since 1930, when only 1.5 percent of the population claimed to be Protestant. The relative percentage of Catholics falls as one goes down the socioeconomic ladder. A 1991 survey found that 93.4 percent of high-income respondents indicated they were Catholic; the proportions declined to 75.2 percent in the middle-income group, and to 69 percent among those in the lower-income group. The survey found that 22 percent of persons at the lower-income levels were Protestants. A June 1998 national survey conducted by the Center for Public Studies (CEP) suggested that 43 percent of Evangelicals were converts from another religion; 98 percent of Catholics had been born into that religion.

The CEP study also found that 8 out of 10 citizens believe in the existence of God, while 14 percent were doubtful and only 2 percent declared themselves atheists. Seventy-two percent of those surveyed identified themselves as Catholics, 16 percent identified themselves as Evangelicals, 7 percent said they had no religion, 4 percent adhered to other religions, and 1 percent did not answer.

The CEP poll also found that 18 percent of persons claimed to attend a church or temple at least once a week. A 1995 CEP survey placed this figure at 27 percent. In the 1998 survey, 29 percent of persons said that they had never attended a church. Thirty-two percent said that they prayed at least once a day and 15 percent said that they never prayed.

While 51 percent of those surveyed expressed "full or great" confidence in their religious organization, two-thirds believed that churches should not try to influence voting decisions or Government actions. Some non-Catholics regard membership in the Christian Democratic Party as contrary to their philosophical beliefs. Several prominent politicians are not Catholic, including the President. There are no Evangelical members of Congress.

There are a wide variety of active faiths. In addition to the dominant Catholic Church and the Pentecostal Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church, Lutheran Church, Reformed Evangelical Church, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, and the Patriarch of Antioch Orthodox Church also are active. The Mormons are active, and there is a Unification Church. Other faiths include Judaism, Islam, and the Baha'i faith. Members of all major faiths are concentrated in the capital, with the Catholic, Evangelical, and Pentecostal churches also active in other regions of the country. Jewish congregations also exist in Valparaíso, Vina del Mar, Valdivia, Temuco, Concepción, and Iquique (though there is no synagogue in the latter city).

Foreign missionaries operate freely, and many priests are of foreign origin.

Schools are required to offer religious education twice a week, on an optional basis, through middle school. It is mandatory to teach the creed requested by parents, although enforcement is sometimes lax.

All major faiths participated in a human rights "dialog table" held by the Defense Minister. In addition to Catholic events, government officials attend major Protestant and Jewish religious and other ceremonies. New President Lagos, for example, attended Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony in early May, along with the Defense and Interior Ministers.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in the period covered by this report. The Government promoted and Congress adopted a new religious law designed to bring other religious entities closer to the legal status enjoyed by the Catholic Church; however, the Catholic Church retained an advantaged position.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor United States citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Citizens generally are tolerant of religious differences, although some discrimination occurs. A bill supported by the executive branch is pending in Congress to outlaw acts of discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin, and the new religion law also includes a clause against religious discrimination. Before passage of the new religion law, the country's Protestants assert that the Government discriminates against them, based upon differing legal status afforded to non-Catholics. They cite the absence of Protestant armed forces chaplains (all chaplains are Catholic), difficulties for pastors to visit military hospitals, and the predominantly Catholic religious education in public schools. Military recruits, whatever their religion, often have to attend Catholic events involving their unit, and being a Catholic is considered beneficial to one's military career.

Non-Catholic clergymen sometimes have difficulties gaining access to prisons and public hospitals; access is at the discretion of administrators. Catholic priests usually do not face such difficulties.

In April 2000, a small group of local Nazis attempted to hold an international Nazi ideological conference. The Government, Congress, and a wide array of societal groups criticized the attempt to hold this meeting. The Government gave orders to immigration authorities to prevent known Nazis from entering the country. On the eve of the scheduled conference, the Chilean organizer of the event was arrested by police and held for several days for previously passing false checks. The meeting was held clandestinely with only a handful of participants (one report said six); almost no persons from abroad attended.

Local Nazis continue to announce their intention to form a political party called the "New Fatherland Society" ("Patria Nueva Sociedad"). This would be the first Nazi political party in the country since the National Socialist Workers Party lost its legal status in 1969. It is unclear whether such a party would be deemed unconstitutional; most analysts question the ability of local Nazis to reach the threshold of required signatures to try to register a party.

Ecumenical groups exist, although they often are formed on an ad hoc basis, depending on the issue involved.

## III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

U.S. Embassy representatives have met with a wide variety of religious leaders, including Santiago's Archbishop and key representatives of Evangelical and Jewish organizations. Informal contact is maintained with representatives and leaders of several other faiths.

As appropriate, embassy officials have cooperated on programs such as anti-drug efforts with church-affiliated groups and the B'nai B'rith.



## COLOMBIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between various faiths are generally amicable, although some indigenous leaders reportedly were intolerant of nontraditional forms of worship. The Roman Catholic Church enjoys a privileged position in society, but many different religions are practiced. Paramilitaries sometimes target representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla movements regularly target representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons, and committed acts of killing, kidnaping, and extortion, as well as inhibiting free religious expression.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The law states that there is no official or state church or religion but adds that the State "is not atheist or agnostic, nor indifferent to Colombians' religious sentiment." Some observers have interpreted this to mean that the State unofficially sanctions a privileged position for the Roman Catholic Church. (Roman Catholicism was the country's official religion until the adoption of the 1991 Constitution.) A 1994 Constitutional Court decision declared unconstitutional any official government reference to religious characterizations of the country.

The law on freedom of religion provides a mechanism for religions to obtain the status of recognized legal entities. The Government extends two different kinds of recognition to religions: recognition of basic juridical personality, and special public recognition. The Ministry of Interior regularly grants the former type of recognition. The only requirement is submission of a formal request and basic organizational information. Additionally, any foreign religious faith that wishes to establish a presence in the country must document official recognition by authorities from its home country. The Ministry of Interior may reject any requests that do not comply fully with these established requirements or that violate fundamental constitutional rights. Among the religions practiced in the country are Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, the Mennonite Church, Calvinism, Lutheranism, the Baptist Church, Presbyterianism, the Methodist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Islam, and Judaism.

Accession to the 1997 public law agreement between the State and non-Roman Catholic religious entities currently is required for any religion that wishes to minister to its adherents via any public institution. For example, participation in the 1997 public law agreement is required to minister to soldiers, public hospital patients, and prisoners and to provide religious instruction in public schools, and the State only recognizes marriages celebrated by churches that are signatories to the 1997 public law agreement. When considering granting accession to the 1997 agreement, the Government takes into account the number of adherents of the religion, the degree of popular acceptance the religion enjoys within society, and other factors deemed relevant, such as the content of the religion's statutes and required behavioral norms. To date, 18 nonRoman Catholic Christian churches have received this special status. More than 40 churches have requested accession to a new public law agreement with the Government, which, the churches propose, would have lower standards for recognition than the 1997 agreement. However, no advances were made toward a new agreement during the period covered by this report. Some prominent non-Christian religious groups, such as the Jewish community, have not requested state religious recognition.

Due to its special relationship with the State, officially sanctioned in a concordat, the Roman Catholic Church was the only religion that was permitted to minister and teach via public institutions between 1887 and 1991. Although the Catholic Church was separated from the State by the 1991 Constitution, it retains a de facto privileged status.

### *Religious Demography*

Although no official data are available, one 1996 study from Los Andes University concluded that 88 percent of citizens are Roman Catholics (although a large percentage do not practice their faith actively), between 6 and 7 percent belong to other Christian denominations, and the remainder belong to other religious faiths/movements (e.g., Jews, Muslims, animists, adherents of various syncretistic beliefs, agnostics, and atheists). Adherents of some religions are concentrated in specific geographic regions. For example, the vast majority of practitioners of a syncretistic religion that blends Roman Catholicism with elements of African animism are Afro-Colombians of Choco department. Jews are concentrated in the major cities; Muslims are concentrated on the Caribbean coast; and adherents of indigenous animistic religions generally are found in remote, rural areas.

The Constitution provides parents with the right to choose the type of education their children receive, including Roman Catholic or other religious education. It also states that no one shall be obliged to receive religious education of any type in public schools. The Roman Catholic Church and non-Catholic religions and Christian denominations that have acceded to the 1997 public law agreement with the State may provide religious instruction in public schools. (No non-Christian religion currently is a signatory to the 1997 public law agreement.) Religions without this special recognition may establish private parochial schools, provided they comply with Education Ministry requirements. For example, the Jewish community operates its own schools.

The Catholic Church has a unique agreement with the Government to provide schools to rural areas that have no state-run schools. These schools are also tax exempt.

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Foreign missionaries require a special visa, which is valid for a maximum of 2 years. The Ministry of Foreign Relations may issue visas to foreign missionaries or members of a foreign religion or denomination, provided that the religion or denomination has received special public recognition. Applicants are required to have a certificate issued by the Ministry of Interior confirming that the religious institution is registered with the Ministry, a certificate issued by the religious institution confirming the applicant's membership in that institution and explaining the purpose of the proposed travel, and proof of economic solvency.

The Government permits proselytizing among the indigenous population, provided that it is welcome and does not induce members of indigenous communities to adopt changes that endanger their survival on traditional lands. There are no other restrictions on missionaries' activities.

Although the Catholic Church was separated from the State by the 1991 Constitution, it retains a de facto privileged status. According to military regulations, only Roman Catholic priests may serve as chaplains.

All legally recognized churches, seminaries, monasteries, and convents are exempt from national and local taxes. Local governments also may exempt from taxes religiously affiliated organizations such as schools and libraries. However, in practice, local governments often exempt only organizations that are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church.

The FARC has placed religious restrictions on persons within the "despeje," the demilitarized zone established in November 1998 in order to facilitate a Government-FARC dialog leading to formal peace talks. For example, in September 1999, the FARC gave a Polish priest 15 days to leave the despeje zone. The FARC guerilla movement did not exclude Roman Catholic and evangelical churches from the arbitrary payment of "war taxes" levied on many organizations in the despeje and elsewhere in the country.

### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In April 1999, the army arrested Colonel Jorge Plazas Acevedo, the chief of intelligence for the army's 13th Brigade, for allegedly heading a kidnaping gang believed responsible for the kidnaping and killing of several Jewish industrialists, including Benjamin Khoudari, whose body was found in April 1999. The authorities also arrested a lieutenant and a sergeant under Plazas's command, and placed all three in preventive detention in April. The military judiciary determined that the three should be tried in civilian courts. In July 1999, the army retired Plazas, and an Attorney General's disciplinary investigation of him was underway at year's end. In connection with the crime, the authorities also arrested two former guerrillas who had become army informants; they remained in detention and under investigation at year's end.

Both the Constitutional Court (on October 7, 1998) and the Council of State (on November 19, 1998) found that Jehovah's Witnesses and Mennonite seminarians had been forced regularly into military service, in violation of constitutional and other provisions for conscientious objectors. Both the Court and the Council ordered the Government to exempt the two Churches' seminarians in the same manner that it exempted Roman Catholic seminarians. Since the Court and Council's rulings, neither Church has experienced further problems of this sort.

Paramilitaries sometimes target representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla movements regularly target representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons, and committed acts of killing, kidnaping, and extortion, as well as inhibiting free religious expression.

Faced with threats by paramilitaries or guerrillas, many evangelical preachers were forced to refrain from publicly discussing the country's internal conflict. The Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church also reported that paramilitaries, the ELN, and the FARC sometimes threatened rural priests with death for speaking out against them.

On November 21, 1999, the bodies of Roman Catholic priest Jorge Luis Maza and Spanish aid worker Inigu Egiluz were pulled from the Atrato river in Choco department. Witnesses reported that the boat in which the pair had been travelling was struck by a boat operated by paramilitaries. Security forces later arrested nine paramilitaries in connection with the crime.

In October 1999, paramilitaries distributed pamphlets at the University of Antioquia campus in Medellin threatening evangelical Christian students with murder.

On May 18, 1999, members of a small guerrilla group, the People's Liberation Army (EPL), killed Catholic priest Pedro Leon Camacho in Cachira, Norte de Santander, after he had denounced publicly the guerrilla group's abuses of the civilian population.

The United Pentecostal Church of Colombia reported that on August 2, 1999, the FARC killed two of its preachers, Jose Honorio Trivino and Miguel Antonio Ospina. Two other preachers and 25 evangelical church members also were reported killed between January and August 1999, mostly in areas greatly affected by the conflict. FARC members were believed responsible for a majority of the killings.

Guerrillas were suspected of the April 2000 massacre of 2 evangelical preachers and 12 church members at Hato Nuevo, Carmen de Bolivar, Bolivar department.

There have been unconfirmed reports that guerrillas attacked rural evangelical Christians and their churches in the mistaken belief that the churches were fronts for U.S. Government activities.

The Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church reported that Roman Catholic churches in Huila, Tolima, Cauca, and Antioquia departments were destroyed during guerrilla attacks on towns and police stations.

On July 30, 1999, the Prosecutor General's human rights unit indicted "Arley Leal," commander of the FARC's 32nd Front, for the September 1998 killing of Catholic priest Alcides Jimenez Chicangana. Jimenez was shot 18 times as he gave a sermon in a Catholic church hours after he led a public rally for peace. Charges against narcotics trafficker Luis Angel Canas, who was detained in 1998 for the crime, were dropped.

According to the Christian Union Movement, the FARC killed 46 of the movement's affiliated preachers between January 1999 and June 2000. As of June 2000, the group reported that the FARC had forced the closure of over 300 evangelical churches in Meta, Guajira, Tolima, Vaupes, Guainia, Guaviare, Vichada, Casanare, and Arauca departments. Additionally, the group claimed that the FARC extorted and, in many cases, forced the closure of rural evangelical schools.

On August 16, 1999, members of the EPL kidnaped the Roman Catholic Bishop of Tibu, Jose de Jesus Quintero, between El Tarra and Tibu, Norte de Santander department, and freed him on September 19. Quintero had spoken out against a rash of paramilitary and guerrilla massacres in the area. He had been kidnaped previously by the ELN in 1997.

On May 30, 1999, members of the National Liberation Army (ELN) kidnaped over 140 persons, including at least 3 American citizens and a Catholic priest, who were attending Mass at the La Maria Catholic church in Cali. The attack apparently represented an attempt by the ELN to raise its political profile; there was no indication that the victims were targeted specifically because of their religious beliefs. All eventually were released. In April 2000, the Administrative Department of Security captured Ovidio Antonio Parra Cortes, the ELN leader suspected of directing the

kidnaping; the army later arrested seven men believed to have participated in the kidnaping.

Despite increased pressure by the Government on the FARC to account for three American missionaries from the New Tribes Mission, who were kidnaped by FARC guerrillas in January 1993, their whereabouts and condition remained unknown.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between various faiths are generally amicable. The Roman Catholic Church and some evangelical churches reported that some indigenous leaders were intolerant of nontraditional forms of worship.

Jewish community leaders estimated that as many as 20 percent of the country's Jewish community had fled the country as of July 1999. Among the principal causes was a string of kidnappings, assaults, and murders affecting Jewish business leaders.

On April 11, 2000, at least three Mormon temples in Cali were bombed. No one was injured in the attacks, which damaged buildings. No one claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Some indigenous groups with distinct animistic or syncretistic religious beliefs are targeted regularly for attack by guerrilla or paramilitary groups. However, these attacks generally are motivated by political differences (whether real or perceived) or by questions of land ownership, rather than by religious differences.

On March 27, 2000, unidentified perpetrators killed Roman Catholic priest Hugo Duque Hernandez at Supia, Caldas department.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, other Christian denominations, and other religions, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## COSTA RICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. While the Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, people of all denominations freely practice their religion without government interference.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion and requires that the State contribute to its maintenance; however, it also prohibits the State from impeding the free exercise of other religions "that do not impugn universal morality or proper behavior." Members of all denominations freely practice their religion without Government interference.

The law grants the Catholic Church tax-free status and allows for the Government to provide land to the Catholic Church. In some cases, the Government retains ownership of the land but grants the Church free use while, in other situations, property simply is donated to the Church. This second method commonly is used to provide land for the construction of local churches. These methods do not meet

all needs of the Church, which also buys some land outright. Government-to-Church land transfers are not covered under any blanket legislation. Instead, they are handled by specific legislative action once or twice per year.

The Government does not inhibit the establishment of churches through taxes or special licensing for religious organizations. However, churches must incorporate to have legal standing, like any other organizations.

Despite the official status of the Catholic Church, ties between it and the State are limited clearly. The Constitution prohibits Church involvement in political campaigning.

#### *Religious Demography*

An April 2000 Demoscopia, Inc. poll reported 73 percent of the population as Catholic, with 15 percent belonging to other Christian denominations. The mainstream Protestant denominations—largely Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian—account for slightly less than 1 percent. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) claims a membership of less than 1 percent, spread evenly throughout the country. In June 2000, it finished the construction of a temple that is to serve as a regional worship center for Panama, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Jehovah's Witnesses have a presence on the Caribbean coast but represent only about 1 percent of the population. Seventh-Day Adventists are present and operate a university, attracting students from throughout the Caribbean basin. NonChristian religions (e.g., Judaism and Islam) represent 3 percent of the population. Groups such as the Unification Church and Hare Krishna are in the country in small numbers. Approximately 8 percent of the population do not practice any religion.

The country's tradition of tolerance and professed pacifism has attracted many religious groups. The Jewish population constitutes less than 1 percent of the country's total; many of its members found refuge before and during the Second World War. The mountain community of Monteverde, a popular tourist destination, was founded during the Korean War by a group of Quakers from the United States, acting on their convictions as conscientious objectors. This community, as well as those of Mennonites, Beechy Amish, and other pacifist religious groups, was welcomed by Costa Rica.

Although not mandatory, Catholic religious instruction is permitted in the public schools. Religious education teachers, including those in public schools, must be certified by the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference, which does not certify teachers from other denominations or faiths. Private schools, including those affiliated with Protestant denominations, are free to include any religious instruction they see fit.

The Government does not restrict the establishment of places of worship. New churches, primarily evangelical Protestant churches that are located in residential neighborhoods, occasionally have conflicts with local governments due to neighbors' complaints about noise and traffic. In contrast, established Catholic Churches are built around the municipal square and do not present such problems.

Foreign missionaries and clergy of all denominations work and proselytize freely. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist between members of the country's different religions, including religious minorities. The country has a history of tolerance.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## CUBA

The Constitution recognizes the right of citizens to profess and practice any religious belief, within the framework of respect for the law; however, in law and in practice, the Government places restrictions on freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

In general unregistered religious groups continued to experience varying degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. Some unregistered religious groups were not only subject to official censure, but also faced pressures from registered religious groups. The Government's policy of permitting apolitical religious activity to take place in government-approved sites remained unchanged; however, citizens worshipping in officially sanctioned churches were often subject to surveillance by state security forces and the Government's efforts to maintain a strong degree of control over religion continued.

The U.S. Government has raised issues of human rights, including religious discrimination and harassment, with government officials; however, the Government has dismissed these concerns. The U.S. Government continuously urges international pressure on the Government to cease its repressive practices.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution recognizes the right of citizens to profess and practice any religious belief, within the framework of respect for the law; however, in law and in practice, the Government places restrictions on freedom of religion. Church and state have been constitutionally separate since the early 20th century. In 1992 the Constitution was changed and references to scientific materialism or atheism were removed. The Government does not favor any one particular religion or church.

The Government requires churches and other religious groups to register with the provincial Registry of Associations within the Ministry of the Interior to obtain official recognition. Although no new denominations were registered during the period covered by this report, the Government has tolerated some new religions on the island, like the Baha'i Faith. However, in practice, the Government refuses to register most new denominations.

Along with recognized churches, the Roman Catholic humanitarian organization Caritas, the Masons, small human rights groups, and a number of nascent fraternal or professional organizations are the only associations outside the control or influence of the State, the Communist Party, and their mass organizations. With the exception of the Masons, who have been established in the country for more than a century, the authorities continue to ignore other religious groups' applications for legal recognition, thereby subjecting members of such groups to potential charges of illegal association.

The Government's main interaction with religious denominations is through the Office of Religious Affairs of the Cuban Communist Party. The Ministry of Interior still engages in efforts to control and monitor the country's religious institutions, including surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of religious professionals and laypersons.

In January 1998, Pope John Paul II made a historic trip to Cuba. The Pope celebrated public Masses in front of hundreds of thousands of persons in several cities, which were televised nationally. In his 11 discourses while in the country, the Pope emphasized the need to allow fundamental freedoms, to respect human rights, and to foster the development of independent civil society. Although the Government released some 300 prisoners from jails across the island, including a little over 100 political prisoners, the Pope's visit did not lead to the level of change expected in terms of increased religious freedom or political change.

##### *Religious Demography*

There is no independent authoritative source on the size or composition of religious institutions and their membership. Although a 1953 survey showed 93 percent of the population identified themselves as Roman Catholic, today about 40 to 45 percent of the population generally are believed to identify themselves, at least nominally, with the Roman Catholic Church, according to information from the U.S.-based Puebla Institute. A significant number of citizens share or have participated in syncretistic Afro-Caribbean beliefs, such as santeria. The Baptists, represented in four different conventions, are possibly the largest Protestant denomination, followed closely by the Pentecostal churches, in particular the Assemblies of God. Twenty-five denominations recognized by the State, including Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists, are members of the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC). Another 24 officially recognized denominations, including Jehovah's Witnesses and the small Jewish community, do not belong to the CCC.

Although Cuba is nominally Roman Catholic, historically it has been a largely secular society without an especially strong religious character. Catholic Church offi-

cials usually estimate that about 10 percent of baptized Catholics go to Mass regularly. Membership in Protestant churches is estimated at 500,000 persons. No figures on the number of Pentecostals are available, although the Seventh-Day Adventists have said that their membership numbers are around 30,000 persons. Church attendance has grown in recent years in some denominations, and has increased substantially at Catholic Church services in the wake of the Pope's visit in January 1998. Church leaders, both Catholic and Protestant, believe that church attendance peaked during 1999 and early 2000.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Government led to strong confrontations with institutional churches in the early 1960's. During that period, many church leaders and religious professionals left the country, fearing persecution. Over 130 Catholic religious workers, including priests, were expelled, and a few served long prison terms. In 1965 the Government forced many priests, pastors, and others "who made religion a way of life" into forced labor camps called military units to aid production (UMAPS), alongside homosexuals, vagrants, and others considered by the regime to be "social scum." The UMAP system ended in 1967. However, over the next 30 years, the Government and the Communist Party systematically discriminated against and marginalized persons who openly professed their faith by excluding them from certain jobs (e.g., teachers). Although the Government abandoned its official atheism in the early 1990's, most churches had been weakened seriously by then, and active participation in religious services had fallen drastically by that time.

In recent years, the Government has eased the harsher aspects of its repression of religious freedom. In 1991 it allowed religious adherents to join the Communist Party, which is the only legal political entity. In 1992 it amended the Constitution to prohibit religious discrimination and removed references to "scientific materialism," i.e., atheism, as the basis for the State. Nevertheless, the Government discourages members of the armed forces from attending religious services in their uniforms.

The law allows for the construction of new churches, but requires churches to apply for permits to authorize such construction. However, the Government rarely has authorized construction permits, forcing many churches to seek permits to meet in private homes. Most registered churches are granted permission to hold services in private homes.

Religious officials are allowed to visit prisoners, but prison officials sometimes refuse visits to certain political prisoners.

Just before Holy Week, April 22–29, 2000, government officials informed Catholic Church officials that no processions would be allowed. When the Church made this information public, state officials changed their position and informed Church officials that churches that previously had requested permission to hold a procession could do so.

The Government continued to enforce a regulation that prevents any Cuban or joint enterprise (except those with specific authorization) from selling computers, facsimile machines, photocopiers, or other equipment to any church at other than the official—and exorbitant—retail prices.

Education is secular and religious institutions are not allowed to operate schools. In the past, students who professed a belief in religion were stigmatized by other students and teachers and were disciplined formally for wearing crucifixes, and for bringing Bibles or other religious materials to school. In some cases these students were prohibited from attending institutions of higher learning, or from studying specific fields. Students who profess a belief in religion now commonly attend institutions of higher education, including enrollment in the Department of Psychology.

Religion is not taught in schools. Churches provide religious education classes to their members. Catholic Church officials report that during the first 6 months of 2000 there was a drop in the number of children attending catechism classes, mostly because of other scheduled activities, usually by local school authorities. There have been no reports of parents being restricted from teaching religion to their children.

Church officials have encountered cases of religious persons experiencing discrimination because of ignorance or personal prejudice by a local official. Religious persons do encounter employment problems in certain professions, like education.

In December 1998, the Government announced in a politburo declaration that henceforth citizens would be allowed to celebrate Christmas as an official holiday. (The holiday had been cancelled, ostensibly to spur the sugar harvest, in 1969, and restored in 1997 as part of the preparations for the Pope's visit.) However, despite the Government's decision to allow citizens to celebrate Christmas as a national hol-

iday, it maintained a December 1995 decree prohibiting nativity scenes in public buildings except those related to the tourist or foreign commercial sector.

Religious groups are required to submit a request to the local ruling official of the Communist Party before being allowed to hold processions or events outside of religious buildings.

The Government has relaxed restrictions on most officially recognized religious denominations. In October 1999, the secretary general of the World Council of Churches officially visited the CCC and met with government officials. During his stay, he presided in a religious ceremony in the First Presbyterian Church in Havana. Jehovah's Witnesses, once considered "active religious enemies of the revolution," are allowed to proselytize quietly door-to-door and are not subject to overt government harassment, although there were sporadic reports of harassment by local Communist Party and government officials. The Government has authorized small assemblies of Jehovah's Witnesses, the opening of a central office in Havana, and publication of the group's magazine and other religious tracts.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Government harassment of private houses of worship continued, with evangelical denominations reporting evictions from houses used for those purposes. According to CCC officials, most of the private houses of worship closed were unregistered, making them technically illegal.

In October 1999, the leader of the United Pentecostal Church, Santos Osmany Dominguez Borjas, was expelled from Havana by security agents and was forced to relocate to Holguin. Osmany returned to Havana a few months later. Members of the United Pentecostal Church of Cuba-Apostolic ("Iglesia Pentecostal Unidad de Cuba-Apostolica") previously had split from the "Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ" because they did not agree with their church's membership in the CCC. Due to this split the group was not registered officially as a religious group.

During 1999 and the first six months of 2000, state security officers regularly harassed human rights advocates who sought to attend religious services commemorating special feast days, such as the September 8, 1999 celebration in honor of Our Lady of Charity, or before significant national days. There were some reports that state security officers detained laypersons in order to prevent them from attending Christmas services and processions. Some persons who planned to participate in the religious procession reportedly were going to use the event to protest the continued imprisonment of political activists and other dissidents.

As in previous years, state security agents in Santiago de Cuba, Havana, and Pinar del Rio visited the homes of human rights activists the night before and the morning of July 13, 1999—the fifth anniversary of the Cuban Border Guard's sinking of the "13th of March" tugboat in which 41 persons, including 21 children, died—to warn them against commemorating the incident. Marcel Valenzuela Salt, a member of Fraternal Brothers for Dignity ("Hermanos Fraternales por la Dignidad"), and five other persons were arrested while driving to a church in Guanabacoa to attend a mass commemorating the incident. Police officers detained them and confiscated the truck driven by Valenzuela, even though the truck's papers clearly indicated that Valenzuela's father was the owner. The truck was returned to his father after many months. Apart from these incidents, there were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

The Ministry of the Interior continued to monitor religious activities, and to use surveillance, infiltration, and harassment against religious groups.

There are church-run publications that are watched closely by the Government, and that are denied access to mass printing equipment. During the Pope's visit, the Catholic Church's ability to distribute even approved information pamphlets was constricted by its lack of access to printing presses. In April 2000, a leading editor of one of the Catholic Church's magazines was criticized in a major editorial of the Communist Party's newspaper as a "known counter-revolutionary."

There are currently some 295 Catholic priests, 40 deacons, and 530 nuns in the country, less than half the total prior to 1960. The Government allowed some foreign priests and nuns to enter the country, but applications of 60 priests and 130 nuns remain pending. Overall numbers of church officials are only slightly higher than before the Papal visit, since most new arrivals replaced retiring priests or those whose time of service in the country had ended. During the first 6 months of 2000, the Government did not extend the visa requests of two priests, one in Havana and another in Santiago de Cuba, and the priests were forced to leave the country.

There were no reports of government pressure against the practice of santeria and other syncretistic Afro-Caribbean religions.



There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; the Pope's January 1998 visit did not lead to the level of change expected by many persons.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Persons largely define themselves as Roman Catholic, although few attend mass regularly. Catholicism has remained a major cultural reference since colonial times. After 40 years of the current regime, societal attitudes, including those toward religion, are heavily conditioned by the attitude of President Fidel Castro and the ruling regime. The Government's decision to allow, and even provide some support for, the 1998 Papal visit greatly boosted the public perception that espousing religious faith was again acceptable. President Castro further cemented this view, most importantly among Communist Party adherents and government officials, in nationally televised and broadcast speeches in which he claimed that the Cuban Revolution had "never" persecuted religious believers.

There were some tensions among religions, often because some religious groups perceived others to be too close to the Government. Tension within the Pentecostal movement worsened due to the establishment of house churches, which some churches believed was fractious, and resulted in Government action against Pentecostal worshippers.

In addition, Pentecostal members of the CCC have complained about the preaching activities of unauthorized foreign missionaries that led some of their members of their churches to establish a new denomination without obtaining the required permits. In April 2000, because of these complaints by the Pentecostals, the CCC formally requested overseas member church organizations to assist them in controlling foreign missionaries and prohibiting them from establishing unauthorized Pentecostal churches.

The Cuban Council of Churches is the only ecumenical body that is recognized by the Government. It comprises many Protestant and Pentecostal denominations and engages in dialog with the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. The Council and the Government generally have a mutually supportive relationship.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Government policy toward Cuba is to promote peaceful, democratic changes and respect for human rights, including religious freedom. The U.S. Government encourages the development of civil society, which includes the strengthening of religious institutions. The U.S. Interests Section in Havana maintains regular contact with the various religious leaders and communities in the country, and supports nongovernmental organization initiatives that aid religious groups. The U.S. Government regularly seeks to facilitate the issuance of licenses for travel by religious persons and for donated goods and materials that in some cases are provided to religious institutions. The U.S. Interests Section has raised issues of human rights, including religious discrimination and harassment, with government officials. However, the Government has dismissed these concerns. The Interests Section reports on cases of religious discrimination and harassment, and the U.S. Government continuously urges international pressure on the Government to cease its repressive practices.

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## DOMINICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

*Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, and Seventh-Day Adventist) but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. The minority religions are Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and Rastafarianism.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any steps to promote inter-faith understanding but also does not monitor or discriminate according to religious faith.

*Governmental Abuses of Religion*

There were no confirmed reports that the Government abused religious freedom; however, members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them. However, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect discrimination on the basis of religious belief by authorities or simply enforcement of laws against marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practice.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversions of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Dominica Christian Council and the Dominica Association of Evangelical Churches conduct activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have discussed issues or events surrounding religious freedom with government officials when soliciting support for international organization resolutions concerning religious freedom.

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**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There is no state religion. However, the Roman Catholic Church, which signed a concordat with the Government in 1954, enjoys special privileges not extended to other religions. These include the use of public funds to underwrite some church expenses, such as rehabilitation of church facilities, and a complete waiver of customs duties when importing goods into the country.

Religious groups are required to register with the Government in order to operate legally. Religious groups other than the Catholic Church must request exemptions from customs duties from the Office of the Presidency when importing goods. At times the process of requesting and being granted a tax exemption can be lengthy; some requests have been denied.

#### *Religious Demography*

The major religious denomination is the Roman Catholic Church. Evangelical Christians (especially Assemblies of God, Church of God, Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals,) Seventh-Day Adventists, the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses), and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) have a much smaller but generally growing presence. Jehovah's Witnesses have a large country headquarters, school, and assembly hall complex in the national district. Many Catholics also practice a combination of Catholicism and Afro-Caribbean beliefs (santeria) or witchcraft (brujeria), but since this practice rarely is admitted openly the number is impossible to estimate. Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism are practiced. There are synagogues (but no rabbis at this time) and there is as yet no mosque in the country.

According to Demos 97, a population survey taken in 1997 by the Instituto de Estudios de Poblacion y Desarrollo, the Dominican population is 68.1 percent Roman Catholic and 11 percent Protestant Christian, inclusive of evangelicals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and traditional Protestants. In the same study, 20.1 percent of the sample said they had no religion. However, evangelical Christians claim 20 to 25 percent of the population, while the Catholic Church claims 87 percent.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Although the Government generally does not interfere with the practice of religion, attendance at Catholic Mass for members of the National Police is compulsory.

Foreign missionaries are subject to no restrictions other than the same immigration laws that govern other foreign visitors. There have been no reports that the Government has ever used these laws to discriminate against missionaries of any religious affiliation. However, in practice the process of applying for and receiving residency status can be long and costly for denominations that bring many foreign missionaries, including groups that proselytize heavily such as evangelical Protestant groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The acquisition of a resident status from immigration authorities currently requires an investment of approximately \$35,000 (RD\$ 577,500), which some groups find overly burdensome. So far, the potential negative impact has been avoided only by the liberal use of administrative appeals.

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses report improved relations with the Government. The Mormons are building a major temple in Santo Domingo with an associated administrative and educational facility. The construction has required large-scale importation of materials, for which the Mormon Church had to seek special exoneration from customs duties for each shipment (unlike the Roman Catholics, for whom such exoneration is complete and automatic). Nevertheless, church officials report no difficulties in acquiring the exemption.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among different religious congregations are harmonious, and society generally is tolerant with respect to religious matters. However, there were occasional reports of religious discrimination on the part of individuals. The evangelical churches proposed a bill requiring Bible reading in public high schools. The Catholic Church has opposed the measure, and negotiations between the two groups to reach a compromise are proceeding amicably.

In August 1999, education authorities investigated a report that the directors of Pilar Constanzo Polytechnic School, in Villa Duarte, National District, were discriminating against students and teachers who were not Catholics. The public school laid off at least 10 teachers, and there were also complaints that Protestant students were refused admission, despite excellent test scores and grades. Students

whose parents are Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, or who adhere to faiths other than Catholicism allegedly were refused entry to the school. No new developments in the investigation were reported during the period covered by this report.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## ECUADOR

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution grants all citizens and foreigners the right to practice the faith of their choice freely, in public or in private; the only limits are "those proscribed by law to protect and respect the diversity, plurality, security, and rights of others."

The Government does not require religious groups to be licensed or registered unless they form nongovernmental organizations that engage in commercial activity. Any religious group wishing to register with the Government must file a petition with the Ministry of Government and provide documentation through a licensed attorney.

#### *Religious Demography*

About 1,000 different religious groups, churches, societies, Christian fraternities, and foundations coexist in the country.

Together with the military and the Government, the Roman Catholic Church is viewed widely as one of the three pillars of society. Approximately 90 percent of the population considers itself to be Roman Catholic, though most citizens do not practice the religion or follow a syncretistic version. For example, many sierra Indians follow a brand of Catholicism that combines indigenous beliefs with orthodox Catholic doctrine. Saints often are venerated in ways similar to Indian deities. In 1998 the Catholic Church had only 36 bishops and 1,382 priests to minister in 997 parishes. At the political level, the Government retains strong ties to the Vatican; the Papal Nuncio is the customary dean of the diplomatic corps. The Government allows missionary activity and religious demonstrations by all religions.

Some Christian, non-Catholic, multid denominational groups such as the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU), the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Hoy Cristo Jesus Bendice (HCJB) have been active in the country for many years. The Christian Alliance was established in 1906; HCJB began operating in the country in 1931, and its World Radio Missionary Fellowship broadcasts reach all parts of the country. Other active Protestant groups include the Evangelical Group, World Vision, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which operates in remote areas with the eventual objective of translating the Bible into Indian languages.

The combination of poverty, neglect, and syncretistic practices in urban and rural areas created conditions that were conducive to the spread of Protestant missionary and Pentecostal evangelical activity. Such activity began in the 1960's, but became more pronounced in the 1980's. Southern Baptists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormon Church), Jehovah's Witnesses, and Pentecostals have been successful in finding converts in different parts of the country. The following faiths and denominations are also present in the country, but in relatively small numbers: Anglican, Assembly of God, Baha'i, Buddhist, Episcopalian, Hindu, Jewish, Lutheran, Muslim, Eastern Orthodox, Presbyterian, Rosicrucians, Masons, Unification Church, and the Church of Scientology. Two relatively new groups are

the Native American churches of Itzachilatan, whose adherents practice Indian healing rites and nature worship, and the followers of Inti, the traditional Inca sun god. Atheists also exist. The total of these non-Catholic groups represents about 10 percent of the population.

The Government allows missionary activity and religious demonstrations by all religions.

The Government does not permit religious instruction in public schools; private schools have complete liberty to provide religious instruction, as do parents in the home. There are no restrictions on publishing religious materials in any language.

In early 1998, police in Pinchincha province suspended the meetings of a group known as "Gnostico Cristiano Universal," following the suicide of 29 members of the "Heaven's Gate" cult in California, while they investigated possible links between the two groups. The Government's investigation was inconclusive. The group has since resumed meetings and there are two branches currently operating in the country.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to return to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although relations between religious communities generally have been amicable, there have been a few incidents of interreligious or intrareligious tension or violence during periods prior to that covered by this report.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is involved in a 4-year legal fight with the former owner of some land purchased for a new temple in Guayaquil. The Church is appealing a court judgement of \$800,000 handed down in favor of the landowner. The Church alleges that the judge may have been bribed. There has been little progress in the case.

In April 1999, Southern Baptist workers reported increasing opposition from local residents to the development of a church and a medical clinic in the town of Chachas. The Baptist workers were accused of "starting a new religion." Based on official permission from community leaders to operate the clinic, local police promised to give protection to the Baptist workers. However, the workers did not require protection, and the clinic is operating normally.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## EL SALVADOR

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the freedom of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Constitution specifically recognizes the Roman Catholic Church, and grants it legal status. In addition, the Constitution provides that other churches may register for such status in accordance with the law. The Civil Code specifies that a church must apply for formal recognition through the General Office of Non-Profit

Associations and Foundations (DGFASFL) within the Ministry of Interior. Each church must present a constitution and bylaws that describe, among other things, the type of organization, location of offices, goals and principles, requirements for membership, type and function of ruling bodies, and assessments or dues. The DGFASFL must determine that the constitution and bylaws do not violate the law before it can certify a church. Once certified, the church must publish the DGFASFL approval and its constitution and bylaws in the official government gazette.

In 1997 the Government implemented a law passed in 1996 that charges the Ministry of Interior with registering, regulating, and overseeing the finances of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and non-Catholic churches in the country. The law specifically exempts unions, cooperatives, and the Catholic Church. The Ministry of Interior already was responsible for registering non-Catholic churches before passage of the 1996 law. The 1996 law and the 1997 implementing regulations did not change the existing mechanism for church registration. There were no allegations that churches encountered problems in obtaining registration.

The regulations implementing the tax law grant recognized churches tax-exempt status. The regulations also make donations to recognized churches tax deductible.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country is predominantly Roman Catholic. According to a 1995 survey by the Central American University Public Opinion Institute (IUDOP), approximately 56.7 percent of the population were members of the Roman Catholic Church. Additionally, 17.8 percent were members of Protestant churches, 2.3 percent were associated with other churches and religious groups, and 23.2 percent were not affiliated with any church or religion. Outside of the Catholic and Protestant churches, there are small communities representing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventist, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, among others. A very small segment of the population practices a native religion. The predominance of the Catholic Church does not impact negatively on the religious freedom of other denominations.

Non-Salvadoran nationals seeking to promote actively a church or religion must obtain a special residence visa for religious activities. Visitors to the country are not allowed to proselytize while in the country on a visitor or tourist visa. There were no allegations during the reporting period of difficulties in obtaining visas for religious activities.

Public education is secular. Private religious schools operate in the country. All private schools, whether religious or secular, must meet the same standards in order to be approved by the Ministry of Education.

The Constitution requires the President, cabinet ministers and vice ministers, Supreme Court justices, magistrates, the Attorney General, the Public Defender, and other senior government officials to be laypersons. However, there is no such requirement for election to the National Legislative Assembly or municipal government offices.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In December 1999, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights published a report on the 1989 murders of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter. The report concluded that the State was responsible for violating the right to life of the eight murdered persons and had failed to investigate those violations effectively. The report also criticized the 1993 general amnesty law, which resulted in the release from custody of two military officers found guilty of the murders in 1992, and called on the Government to reopen the case. President Francisco Flores publicly noted the issuance of the report and reiterated the steps taken through the Salvadoran justice system to investigate and punish the crime. However, he declined to reopen the case, stating that to do so would undermine the integrity of the post-civil war amnesty, which he regarded as essential to the continuing process of national reconciliation. In March 2000, the Central American University formally filed a suit calling for the reopening of the case, which brought formal charges before the Attorney General's office against several persons who were high-ranking officials at the time of the killings, including former President Alfredo Cristiani, and requested the detention of five former military officers.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. Four of the largest Protestant denominations—the Episcopal, Baptist, Lutheran, and Reform churches—have formed the National Conference of Churches (CNI), an inter-faith organization created to promote religious tolerance and to coordinate a church-sponsored social program.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Government has cooperated with the United States and other nations in international human rights forums in criticizing violations of religious freedom. The U.S. Government maintains a regular dialog with the principal religious leaders, church officers, church-sponsored universities, and nongovernmental organizations.

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**GRENADA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

*Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist) but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. The minority religions are Islam and the Baha'i Faith.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any steps to promote inter-faith understanding but also does not monitor or discriminate according to religious faith.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. There are no known activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different religions.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have discussed issues or events surrounding religious freedom with government officials when soliciting support for international organization resolutions concerning religious freedom.

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## GUATEMALA

The Constitution provides for the freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion; however, the Constitution recognizes explicitly the separate legal personality of the Catholic Church.

The Government does not establish requirements for the recognition of religions. Members of a religion need not register simply in order to worship together. However, the Government does require religious congregations (as well as other non-religious associations and nongovernmental organizations) to register as legal entities in order to be able to transact business. Such legal recognition is necessary, among other things, for a congregation to be able to rent or purchase premises, enter into contracts, and enjoy tax exempt status. The Government does not charge religious groups a registration fee.

The Catholic Church does not have to register as a legal entity. For non-Catholic congregations, the process for establishing a legal personality is relatively straightforward and the requirements do not vary from one denomination to another. A congregation must file a copy of its bylaws and a list of its initial membership with the Ministry of Government. The congregation must have at least 25 initial members and the bylaws must reflect that the congregation will pursue religious or spiritual purposes. Applications are rejected only if the organization does not appear to be devoted to a religious purpose, appears to be in pursuit of illegal activities, or engages in activities that appear likely to threaten the public order. There were no reports that the Government rejected any group's application.

The Peace Accord regarding the rights of indigenous people, which was signed in 1995, includes provisions protecting the exercise of indigenous religious beliefs and practices. This agreement also protects sacred and ceremonial indigenous sites as archaeological preserves. The agreement called for Congress to pass legislation to amend the Constitution in order to "recognize, respect, and protect the distinct forms of spirituality practiced by the Mayan, Garifuna, and Xinka" people. Congress subsequently passed a law containing 50 proposed constitutional amendments, including this amendment, but in May 1999, the package was defeated in a popular referendum.

#### *Religious Demography*

Historically, Guatemala has been an overwhelmingly Catholic country. However, in recent decades, evangelical Protestant groups have gained a significant number of members. Although there is no accurate census of religious affiliation, some sources estimate that approximately 60 percent of the population are Catholic and approximately 40 percent are Protestant, primarily evangelical. Other groups are represented, including Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and small communities of Jews and Muslims. Although many persons nominally affiliated with Catholicism or a Protestant denomination do not actively practice their religion, few citizens consider themselves atheists. There are no accurate statistics on church attendance, although various sources report that it is very high in the evangelical community and somewhat lower in the Catholic community.

The largest Protestant denomination is the Assembly of God, followed by the Church of God of the Complete Gospel, and the Prince of Peace Church. There are numerous other Protestant denominations represented, some specific to Central America and others, such as Presbyterians, Baptists, and Mennonites, which are represented worldwide. Within the indigenous population, a significant proportion practices elements of traditional Mayan spirituality, generally in conjunction with another religion, most commonly Catholicism. Protestant churches historically have been less tolerant of syncretistic practices than the Catholic Church, which reportedly accepts any pre-Columbian or traditional practices that are not in direct conflict with Catholic dogma.



Catholic and Protestant churches are distributed throughout the country and their adherents are distributed among all major ethnic groups and political parties. However, evangelical Protestants appear to be represented in greater proportion in the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), which became the governing party when it won the presidency and a majority in Congress in the fall 1999 elections. The FRG is headed by former de facto president and retired General Efraín Ríos Montt, now President of Congress and a longtime elder of the Church of the Word.

The Government does not have any organized programs to promote inter-faith understanding or dialog.

Foreign missionaries are required to obtain a missionary visa, which is issued for a period of up to 1 year and is renewable. Such visas require a sponsor who is able and willing to assume financial responsibility for the missionary while he or she is in the country. With a missionary visa, foreign missionaries may engage in all lawful activities, including proselytizing.

The Government does not subsidize religious groups directly. However, some sources report that the Government occasionally provides financial assistance to private schools established by religious organizations. The Constitution permits religious instruction in public schools, although public schools are not required to provide such instruction. There is no national framework for determining the nature or content of religious instruction in public schools. Accordingly, when provided, such instruction tends to be programmed at the local level.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In January 2000, authorities arrested a former Presidential Military Staff (EMP) specialist, an active duty EMP captain, and a retired colonel for the April 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi (See Section II).

In the case arising out of the 1994 murder of evangelical minister Pascual Serech in Chimaltenango, charges remained pending against military commissioner Victor Roman, an alleged collaborator in the crime and also the accused perpetrator of the 1995 murder of evangelical pastor Manuel Saquic. Roman remained at large despite an order for his capture and the offer of a reward.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable, if distant. According to members of the Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and Jewish communities, complaints of discrimination on the basis of religion are rare. There were no reports of violence or widespread societal discrimination against religious minorities. However, there have been isolated reports of mob lynchings being carried out in remote areas against persons suspected of sorcery.

On July 27, 1999, unidentified assailants shot and killed Mayan priest Raul Coc Choc at his home in the department of Chimaltenango. Coc Choc was a leader of the National Association of Mayan Priests; members of the board reported that he had received numerous death threats over the telephone. Religious and indigenous leaders called for a thorough investigation. After detaining and later releasing a suspect, the judge ordered the case provisionally closed for lack of evidence, thereby enabling the prosecutors to continue their investigation.

The April 26, 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi, the Coordinator of the Archbishop's Office on Human Rights, occurred just 2 days after his delivery of the final report of the office's "Recovery of Historical Memory" project, which detailed many of the human rights abuses committed during the 36-year-long internal conflict. Because the Bishop's murder occurred so soon after his public delivery of the report, which held the military, military commissioners, and civil self-defense patrol forces responsible for approximately 80 percent of war-related human rights violations, some observers suspect a political motive for the crime. The authorities rearrested the slain Bishop's assistant and co-occupant of the parish house, Father Mario Orantes, in March 2000 and charged him with the murder for the second time. The former parish house cook, Margarita Lopez, was rearrested in January 2000 and was charged as an accessory to the crime. Orantes and Lopez are scheduled to stand trial in the latter half of 2000. Three other suspects, former Presidential Military Staff (EMP) specialist Obdulio Villanueva; active duty EMP captain Byron Lima

Oliva; and Lima's father, retired Colonel Byron Lima Estrada, were arrested in January 2000 for Bishop Gerardi's murder and also are awaiting trial in the latter half of 2000. The Government's investigation appears to have established a political motive for the killing, but details are unavailable as prosecutors prepare their trial strategy. There is no evidence that suggests that the murder was motivated by the Bishop's religious faith or practice.

The ecumenical movement is weak, although there are occasional inter-faith meetings.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. U.S. Embassy officials at various levels, including the Ambassador, have met on many occasions with leaders of the Catholic Church, and of Church-sponsored institutions. The Embassy also maintains an active dialog with the Catholic Church hierarchy and affiliated organizations.

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## GUYANA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society, despite ethnic tensions, contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Members of all faiths are allowed to worship freely.

There is no state or otherwise dominant religion and the Government practices no form of religious favoritism or discrimination.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country is a very diverse nation, both religiously and ethnically. Nearly half the population traces its ancestry to the Indian subcontinent, while more than one-third is of African descent. These two major ethnicities, along with smaller groups of native South Americans and persons of European and Chinese descent, practice a wide variety of religions.

Approximately 50 percent of the population are either practicing or nominal Christians—roughly one-third are Anglicans, one-quarter are Roman Catholics, and 15 percent are Pentecostals; there are smaller percentages of Baptists, Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Practicing or nominal Hindus constitute roughly 41 percent of the population, while Sunni Muslims constitute about 9 percent. Although not included in official figures, substantial numbers of the population practice Rastafarianism and/or a traditional Caribbean religion known locally as "Obeah," either apart from or in conjunction with the practice of other faiths. Members of all ethnic groups are well represented in all religions, with two exceptions: almost all Hindus are Indo-Guyanese, while nearly all Rastafarians are Afro-Guyanese. There are a wide variety of foreign missionaries in the country, and there are no restrictions on foreign religious proselytizing.

The Government has promoted cooperation among religious communities as a means of addressing long-standing racial tensions.

Until 1979 almost all elementary and high schools in the country were run by church-affiliated organizations. In 1979 the Government effectively banned such schools, declaring that all schools would come under government control and requiring that all children attend public, non-denominational schools. However, beginning in the late 1980's, these provisions were relaxed. Both public and religiously affiliated schools now exist, and parents are free to send their children to the schools of their choice without sanction or restriction. The Government makes no requirements regarding religion for any official or non-official purposes.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the country's diverse religious communities are amicable. Although significant problems exist between the country's two main ethnic groups, religious leaders have worked together frequently to attempt to bridge these gaps.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

# HAITI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for the right to practice all religions and faiths, provided that such practice does not disturb law and order, and the Government respects this right in practice.

For many years, Roman Catholicism was the official religion of the country. While its official status ended with the enactment of the 1987 Constitution, neither the Government nor the Holy See has renounced the 1860 Concordat, which continues to serve as the basis for relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the State and the operation of Catholic religious orders in the country. In many respects, Roman Catholicism retains its traditional primacy among the country's religions. Functions with an official or quasi-official character are held in Catholic churches and cathedrals, and certain Catholic holy days are observed officially as national holidays.

The Constitution provides that legal conditions for recognition and operation of religious groups be established. The Ministry of Religious Affairs administers the relevant laws and is responsible for registering churches, clergy, and missionaries. Recognition by the Ministry affords religious groups standing in legal disputes, protects churches' tax-exempt status, and extends civil recognition to church documents such as marriage and baptismal certificates. Registered religious groups are required to submit an annual report of their activities to the Ministry. Although many nondenominational Christian groups and voodoo practitioners have not sought official recognition, there were no reports of any instance in which this requirement has hampered the operation of a religious group. Goods brought into the country for use by churches and missionaries registered with the Department of Revenue are exempted from customs duties, and registered churches are not taxed.

### *Religious Demography*

While precise statistics are unavailable, about 80 percent of citizens are Roman Catholic. Most of the remainder belong to a variety of Protestant denominations. The largest of these are Baptist (10 percent) and Pentecostal (4 percent). Other significant non-Catholic Christian groups include Methodists, Episcopalians, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Adventists, and Orthodox. There are also many nondenominational Christian congregations. The percentage of Protestants generally is acknowledged to be growing, but reliable

statistics are unavailable. Small numbers of non-Christian groups are present, including Jews, Muslims, Rastafarians, and Baha'is. Voodoo, a traditional religion derived in part from West African beliefs, is practiced alongside Christianity by a large segment of the population. While there are associations of voodoo practitioners and priests, there is no organized hierarchy or established voodoo church.

Foreign missionaries operate freely. They enter on regular tourist visas and submit paperwork similar to that submitted by domestic religious groups in order to register with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Many are affiliated with U.S.-based denominations or individual churches. Others are independent, nondenominational Christian groups. Missionary groups operate hospitals, orphanages, schools, and clinics throughout the country. U.S. churches often send teams to Haiti on short-term projects. Some of these projects involve humanitarian or educational work, while others are purely evangelistic in nature. While some missionaries were concerned by the slowness of the Government to issue them residence permits, there was no indication that such delay was due to deliberate harassment on the part of the authorities.

The Constitution stipulates that persons cannot be required to join an organization or receive religious instruction contrary to their convictions. This is accepted to mean, among other things, that in parochial schools run by the Catholic Church or one of the Protestant denominations, the school authorities may not permit proselytization on behalf of the church with which the school is affiliated. Parents have been quick to complain and publicize the isolated instances in which this principle has been violated.

Only 15 percent of the country's schools are public. In some of these, Catholic and other clergy play a role in teaching and administration. This is regulated by local authorities on an ad hoc basis. Church-run schools and hospitals are subject to oversight by the Ministries of Education and Health, respectively.

The Government does not interfere with the operation of radio and other media affiliated with religious groups. In addition to the many radio stations operated by religious (mostly Protestant and evangelical) groups, religious programming is a staple of commercial broadcasting.

Some Protestant and Catholic clergy are active in politics. A Protestant pastor has founded a political party, MOCHRENA (Christian Movement for a New Haiti). Several Catholic priests are among the leadership of the Fanmi Lavalas party of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, who is himself a former priest. The Conference of Catholic Bishops (CEH) also occasionally issues statements on political issues.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religion plays a prominent role in society. Many citizens display a keen interest in religious matters, and freely express their personal religious beliefs or affiliation.

While society generally is tolerant of the variety of religious practices that flourish in the country, Christian attitudes toward voodoo vary. While many Christians accept voodoo as part of the country's cultural patrimony, others regard it as incompatible with Christianity, and this has led to isolated instances of conflict in the recent past.

Ecumenical organizations exist. Inter-faith cooperation is perhaps most effective in the National Federation of Private Schools (FONHEP).

Particularly in rural areas, accusations of sorcery have been known to lead to mob violence resulting in deaths. Given the prevalence of voodoo in these areas, it appears likely that voodoo practitioners are targeted in some cases.

There were no developments in the case of the August 1998 killing of social activist Father Jean Pierre Louis; the motives appear to have been either criminal or political.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince maintains contact with many American missionaries and is responsive to their concerns.

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## HONDURAS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There is no state religion. However, the Government consults with the Roman Catholic Church on key issues of mutual concern, such as education and foreign debt relief.

The Constitution grants the President the power to grant "juridical personality" to associations, including churches. This personality is a prerequisite to being accorded certain rights and privileges, such as tax exemption. Associations are required to submit an application describing their internal organization, by-laws, and goals to the Ministry of Government and Justice. In the case of evangelical churches, the application is then referred to a group of leaders from the "Evangelical Fraternity of Churches" for review. This group has the power to suggest, but not require, changes. All religious applications also are referred to the State Solicitor's Office for a legal opinion that all elements meet constitutional requirements. Applications almost always meet these requirements. The President ultimately signs the approved resolutions granting juridical personality. The Ministry of Government and Justice did not turn down any applications for juridical personality on behalf of a church during the period covered by this report. The Catholic Church and other recognized churches are accorded tax exemptions and waivers of customs duty on imports.

#### *Religious Demography*

There are no reliable government statistics on the distribution of membership in churches. The Catholic Church reports a total membership of just over 80 percent of the country's 6.0 million citizens. In February and March 1999, the Le Vote company conducted personal interviews on religious issues with persons age 18 or older in 1,330 households distributed throughout the country. The company reported that 60.3 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Catholics, 28.7 percent as evangelical Christians, and 6.8 percent as other; 4.2 percent either did not know or provided no answer. The principal faiths include Roman Catholicism, Judaism, the Greek Orthodox rite, the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mennonite Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Union Church, and some 300 evangelical Protestant churches, the most prominent of which include the Abundant Life, Living Love, and Grand Commission churches. The National Association of Evangelical Pastors represents the evangelical leadership.

There are religious schools and schools operated by churches; they receive no special treatment from the Government, nor do they face any restrictions.

The Government requires foreign missionaries to obtain permits to enter and reside in the country. A Honduran institution or individual must sponsor a missionary's application for residency, which is submitted to the Ministry of Government and Justice. Permits generally are granted by the Ministry; the resolution granting residency then is registered with the Directorate General of Population and Migration Policy.

The Government's attitude toward non-mainstream religious groups can be less hospitable. In April 2000, the Government temporarily detained, and subsequently deported, two Colombian nationals who reportedly were members of a group known as "The Patriarchate of the Holy Universal Tao Christian Church of Interoceanic Rescue." The Government claimed that the two individuals had entered the country as tourists, but that they had intended to proselytize without applying for legal status as foreign missionaries, as required under the law.

The Catholic Church is seeking the return of former properties of historic interest confiscated by the Government at independence in 1825.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the principal religious communities are amicable. The Catholic Church has designated the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa as the national-level official in charge of ecumenical relations and the Archbishop has established an ecumenical and interreligious dialog section within his Archdiocese. The Archdiocese also is planning to build an inter-faith library in Tegucigalpa to display books from a wide variety of Christian denominations. Christian churches work together through the private Christian Development Commission, currently directed by a Mennonite official. There is some concern by established churches over an alleged influx of Brazilian-origin religious groups who have religious beliefs different from those held by the established rites.

The Catholic Church sponsors a television station supported by a studio and other facilities.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The U.S. Embassy also maintains a regular dialog with religious leaders, church-sponsored universities, and non-governmental religious organizations.

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# JAMAICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There is no state or dominant religion. The Government has no requirements for recognition as a religion.

### *Religious Demography*

According to official government statistics compiled during the 1991 census (the latest available figures), 21 percent of the population identify themselves as members of the Church of God, 9 percent as Seventh-Day Adventists, 9 percent as Baptist, 8 percent as Pentecostal, 6 percent as Anglican, 4 percent as Roman Catholic, 3 percent as United Church, 3 percent as Methodist, 2 percent as Jehovah's Witnesses, 1 percent as Moravian, 1 percent as Brethren, 1 percent unstated, and 9 percent as "other." (The category "other" includes Hindus, Jews, and Rastafarians.) Of those surveyed, 24 percent stated that they had no religious affiliation. The majority of those who reported no religion were children.

There are religious schools; they are not subject to any special restrictions and do not receive any special treatment from the Government. Foreign missionaries are subject to no restrictions other than the same immigration laws that govern other foreign visitors.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country has a well-established tradition of religious tolerance and diversity. Relations among the various religious communities are amicable.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

**MEXICO**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There is a generally amicable relationship among the various religions in society, which contributes to the free practice of religion; however, in parts of the state of Chiapas continued political, cultural, and religious tensions have limited the free practice of religion within some communities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

Religious groups cannot operate legally without registering as religious associations with the Under Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Federal Secretariat of Government. Although the Government does reject a few applications, usually because of incomplete documentation, the registration process is routine. About 5,650 religious associations are registered. Since July 1, 1999, 174 associations have been registered, and 3 were rejected. The three applications were rejected because of incomplete documentation under the Law of Religious Associations and Public Worship.

To be registered as a religious association, the Government requires that a group articulate its fundamental doctrines and body of religious beliefs, not be organized primarily to make money, and not promote acts physically harmful or dangerous to its members. Religious groups must be registered to apply for official building permits, receive tax exemptions, and to hold religious meetings outside of their place of worship.

The current situation of religious freedom reflects the historic tensions between the Catholic Church and the modern state. For most of the country's nearly 300 years as a Spanish colony, the Catholic Church involved itself heavily in politics. This involvement continued throughout the post-independence period and through the end of the Mexican Revolution in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following the Revolution, the Constitution included severe restrictions on the rights of the Church and of members of clergy, reflecting strong anti-clerical feelings. Tensions between the Church and the state eased after 1940, but constitutional restrictions were maintained even as enforcement became progressively lax over the ensuing decades. In 1992 the Government reestablished diplomatic relations with the Holy See and the Government lifted almost all restrictions on the Catholic Church by, among other things, granting religious groups legal status, conceding them limited property rights, and lifting restrictions on the number of priests in the country. However, the law continues to mandate a strict separation of church and state.

The separation between church and state became a topic of debate during the 2000 presidential election campaign. Candidates made numerous public appearances with Catholic Church officials. Onesimo Cepeda, Bishop of Ecatepec, personally congratulated Francisco Labastida for winning the presidential primary election held by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Presidential election winner Vicente

Fox, candidate of the National Action Party (PAN), called for revising the Constitution to allow for a closer relationship between church and state. Some persons interpreted statements by leaders of the Church as support for Fox. On March 24, 2000, the Mexican Bishops Conference released a pastoral letter, which warned that the country's democratic transition was not ensured and that an "authoritarian regression," even by electoral means, could not be ruled out. The letter also criticized the use of "intimidation and coercion" of the populace to promote a "fear vote" and called electoral fraud a sin. Secretary of Government Diodoro Carrasco criticized the letter as an example of inappropriate church involvement in politics, but took no punitive action. Although most citizens are Catholic, 57 percent of the population is against religious leaders influencing government decisions, according to a May 2000 poll released by the newspaper *Reforma*.

#### *Religious Demography*

There is no single definitive source on the religious makeup of the population. According to various government, press, and religious group sources, about 89 percent of population of approximately 100 million are at least nominal believers in the Roman Catholic faith. There are 11,000 churches, and 14,000 ordained Catholic priests and nuns in the country. An additional 90,000 laypersons work in the Catholic Church system. Various sources maintain that Protestants account for approximately 6 percent of the population. A recent press report indicates that, of the Protestants, Presbyterians account for 1 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists, 0.81 percent; Jehovah's Witnesses, 0.51 percent; Baptists, 0.1 percent; Methodists, 0.04 percent; Anglicans, 0.01 percent; and Lutherans 0.01 percent of the total population. The Undersecretary of Religious Affairs reported in May 2000 that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) constitutes approximately 0.01 percent of the population; Orthodox Christianity, 0.05 percent; and non-Christian groups, 2 percent (including Judaism, 0.3 percent, and Muslims, 0.4 percent). Three percent of the population do not identify with any organized religion. There is no estimate of the number of atheists or of those who do not practice any religion. Ninety-eight percent of citizens say that they believe in God and 76 percent consider themselves religious. Fifty-five percent attend religious ceremonies at least once a week, 19 percent once a month, and 20 percent less than once a month, according to news reports.

Some indigenous people in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Yucatan practice a syncretistic religion that mixes Catholic and pre-Hispanic Mayan religious beliefs. Chiapas has the highest concentration of Protestants in the country, about 45 percent of the state's population, according to official estimates, although some evangelical Protestant groups claim that the number is closer to 60 percent. The competition among various religious groups for adherents there has contributed to tension among religious groups which has resulted in violence.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government requires religious groups to apply for a permit to construct or convert existing buildings into new churches; 7,139 such permits were granted between 1992 and August 1998 and religious groups report no difficulty in obtaining Government permission for these activities.

Religious buildings constructed under permits after 1992 are the property of the respective churches, whereas previously, religious buildings were declared "national patrimony" and the State claimed ownership of about 85,000 religious structures. From July 1, 1999 to May 16, 2000, the Government granted decisions on 661 property claims in favor of churches, which resulted in religious groups gaining 854 properties. Religious groups have registered 8,834 properties with the Government. The Government has denied 240 property claims since July 1, 1999 and 1,560 since 1993, because the properties in question were deemed to be owned by the State.

Religious associations must notify the Government of their intent to hold a religious meeting outside of a licensed place of worship. The Government received 2,682 such notifications between January and mid-May, 2000, and did not deny permission for any religious meetings. On May 6, 2000, 50,000 persons celebrated the first large-scale outdoor Catholic Mass in Mexico City's central square since 1924.

The law bars clergy from holding public office, advocating partisan political views, supporting political candidates, or opposing the laws or institutions of the State.

To visit the country for religious purposes, foreign religious workers must secure government permission. Although the Government limits the number of visas each religious group is allowed, it has granted visas to 25,761 foreign religious workers since 1994, 2,555 of them in the first six months of 2000. Some religious groups allege that it is government policy to keep foreign religious practitioners out of Chiapas and Oaxaca, thus making it more difficult for religious workers going to



those states to obtain visas. The Government maintains that it does not deny visas based on religion, and does not expel religious workers based on their religious activities. Rather the Government argues that foreign religious workers have been expelled for inappropriate political behavior.

Relations were difficult between the Catholic Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, and the Government during the tenure of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, which ended in April 2000. The situation in Chiapas is a result of a complex mix of economic, ethnic, political, and religious tensions. The San Cristobal Diocese has complained that its foreign clergy are unable to get their visa status extended or rectified (many enter on tourist visas). In February 1998, the Government expelled French Catholic priest Michel Chanteau, who had been the parish priest of Chenalho, Chiapas, for 32 years, on immigration grounds. Chanteau had blamed the Government publicly for the December 1997 Acteal massacre. In 1995 the Government expelled Father Loren Riebe and two other foreign priests from Chiapas. In March 1999, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found that the three priests' rights to religious freedom had been violated and recommended that the expulsion order be reversed. The Commission also recommended that the officials involved in the case be investigated and sanctioned. The Government maintains that the priests were expelled solely for their political activity and rejected the Commission's recommendations.

Local officials in Chiapas provided active or tacit support to indigenous groups that physically prevented Catholic catechists from occupying and opening existing churches. Local bosses at times acquiesced in or ordered the harassment or violent expulsion of largely evangelical groups (see Section II).

The Constitution mandates a strict separation of church and state. Religious instruction is prohibited in public schools, but religious associations are free to maintain their own private schools, which receive no public funds. The Catholic Church maintains its own schools, but complains of government restrictions on the running of those schools and the raising and spending of school funds. It also contends that the right to learn the religion of one's choice should not be limited to those who can afford to pay for a parochial school education.

Although religious associations cannot own or administer broadcast radio or television stations, the Catholic Church owns and operates a national cable television channel. Government permission is required to transmit religious programming on broadcast radio or television, and permission is granted routinely. In 1999 the Government authorized the radio and television transmission of 7,297 Masses and other religious activities, and in the first 6 months of 2000 it authorized 2,858 such transmissions. It did not deny any requests.

The Under Secretariat of Religious Affairs promotes religious tolerance and investigates cases of religious intolerance. Often these cases involve infringements of religious freedom by local governments, especially in Chiapas and Oaxaca. Since 1993 the Under Secretariat has investigated 528 cases, including 54 in 1999 and 19 in the first six months 2000, and has concluded 272 of them. A total of 256 cases remain open.

In Ensenada, Baja California, Veronica Torres Armenta, a member Jehovah's Witnesses, was denied access to school because her faith does not permit homage to national symbols, such as the flag. After criticism from the state human rights commission the state secretary of education ordered that the girl be allowed to matriculate.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees. The Government continued to investigate the case of 13 Protestants arrested in Mitziton, Chiapas in June 1999, but reported no new findings on the case. Police arrested the Protestants as they were building a church.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is a generally amicable relationship among the various religions; however, in the state of Chiapas, tension between religious groups and between pro-government armed civilian groups and religious laypersons, persisted, and at times resulted in violence.

The Catholic Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, has complained that progovernment armed civilian groups threaten and harass its lay catechists. Moreover, human rights groups allege that such groups murdered five catechists between 1994 and 1997. Nonetheless, the motive for these killings has not been established, nor has anyone been apprehended or charged. The diocese also has alleged that these groups vandalized 28 Catholic churches in Chiapas and caused more than 20 other churches to close between 1994 and 1997. Church closures often occurred when local indigenous groups physically prevented Catholic catechists from occupying and opening existing churches, with the active or tacit support of local officials.

After years of neglect, the Chiapas state government has been trying to mediate between communities divided by religious differences. Its efforts occasionally have been successful. For example, state government authorities negotiated solutions to conflicts in San Juan Chamula, including the return of groups expelled in 1998 and 1999.

There is a long history of religious intolerance in, and expulsions from, certain indigenous communities whose residents follow syncretistic (Catholic-Mayan) religious practices and view other religious practices as a threat to indigenous culture. In parts of Chiapas, local bosses of indigenous communities sometimes regard evangelical groups and Catholic lay catechists as unwelcome outside influences, and potential economic and political threats. As a result, these bosses sometimes acquiesced in, or actually ordered, the harassment or expulsion of individuals belonging primarily, but not exclusively, to Protestant evangelical groups. In many cases, these expulsions involved the burning of homes and crops, beatings, and, occasionally, killings. These problems more frequently arise in "autonomous indigenous areas" under the influence of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), according to evangelical leaders. The abuse related to these and other incidents, apparently did not occur solely and exclusively on the basis of religion. While religious differences were often a prominent feature of such incidents, ethnic differences, land disputes, and struggles over local political and economic power were very often the basic cause of the problems.

There were three reports of conflict between Catholic/Mayan syncretists and Protestant Evangelicals in Chiapas. On July 18, 1999, Catholic/Mayan syncretists expelled 97 Evangelicals from their homes in Icaluntic. The displaced group relocated temporarily to San Cristobal, under the protection of the State Secretariat for Attention to Indigenous Affairs. Two attempts by the displaced group to return to Icaluntic failed. As part of the agreement that allowed the Evangelicals to return, the Government paid them \$77,000 (730,000 pesos) as compensation for damages to their houses, crops, livestock, and other property. Consequently, on December 3, 250 police, federal and state officials, as well as representatives of the Chiapas state human rights commission escorted the Evangelicals to their homes. In addition, state police officers stayed temporarily in Icaluntic to prevent conflict between the Catholic/Mayan syncretists and the Evangelicals.

On March 5, 2000, Catholic/Mayan syncretists evicted at least 70 evangelical families from Plan de Ayala, Chiapas. Later that month 250 state police escorted the Evangelicals back to Plan de Ayala, where they remained for 2 weeks. However, in early April the Catholic/Mayan syncretists again evicted 20 of the evangelical families from that community. On April 16, 2000, the Catholic/Mayan syncretists drove out the 70 police officers stationed there to keep the peace and set up roadblocks around the town. The following day the expelled Evangelicals attempted to return to the community, but were prevented from doing so by the roadblock. Expelled evangelical families reported that the Catholic/Mayan syncretists demanded that they sign a statement renouncing their faith as a prerequisite for their return to the community. Attempting to mediate, governor Roberto Albores offered social programs to the Catholic/Mayan syncretists if they allowed the Evangelicals access to the town. The Catholics accepted the offer, but denied blocking access to community members, claiming that they only wanted to "prevent strangers from infiltrating the community and causing problems." They removed the roadblock, but tensions remain.

Tension between Catholic/Mayan syncretists and evangelical groups continues to be a problem in the municipality of San Juan Chamula. The Evangelical Commission for the Defense of Human Rights claims that municipal authorities have expelled 30,000 persons in the last 30 years. The children of Evangelicals have been denied access to the local public schools in six communities since 1994.

Adventists in Oaxaca report that families who were members of their denomination were expelled from the community of Santo Tomas Kirri. In Santo Domingo, Mexico state, Adventists report that they were forced temporarily to close their

church. In Chiapas the Adventists viewed the local government as reluctant to intervene in towns governed by traditional “practices and customs.”

On May 17, 2000, the body of an alleged witch doctor was found in Comitán, Chiapas. The motive for his death is suspected to be the victim’s practice of witchcraft, which is common in rural areas of southern Mexico; no suspects were arrested or charged.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with government officials, nongovernmental organizations, and religious leaders. Embassy officials have emphasized that the U.S. supports religious freedom worldwide, and takes a proactive approach in specific cases.

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## NICARAGUA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Constitution also states that no one “shall be obligated by coercive measures to declare their ideology or beliefs.”

The Roman Catholic Church is not an official state religion; however, it enjoys a close relationship with the secular Government. The Roman Catholic Church is the most politically active religious denomination and has significant political influence. Catholic Church leaders routinely meet with senior government officials. The historical position of the Church is such that most religiously affiliated monuments and memorials are Catholic-related. However, the predominance of the Catholic Church does not impact negatively on the religious freedom of others.

The Government’s requirements for legal recognition of a church are similar to its requirements for other nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s). A church must apply for “Personería Jurídica” (legal standing), which must be approved by the National Assembly. Following assembly approval, a church must register with the Ministry of Government as an association or a foundation.

A recognized church can be granted tax-exempt status, known as exoneration. Exoneration is a contentious issue, in particular with regard to exemption from customs duties on imported goods donated for humanitarian purposes. Goods donated to established churches and other nonprofit religious organizations recognized by the Government, and that are intended for the exclusive use of the church or organization, are eligible for exoneration from duties. Prior to 1997, the Government provided exonerated churches with a letter confirming their tax-exempt status. A church could obtain customs clearance for imported donated goods by presenting its exemption letter. However, in 1997 the Government implemented a new customs regime that required clearance from the Office of External Cooperation, the Ministry of Finance, the Customs Office, and the municipality in which the donated goods would be used before a tax exemption could be approved and the goods released.

A number of churches and other nonprofit religious organizations, including the Lutheran Church, the Moravian Church, and the Council of Evangelical Churches, reported bureaucratic delays in obtaining exoneration from customs duties for humanitarian aid in the form of donated goods. Some non-Catholic churches complained that the Catholic Church was receiving favored treatment in this regard and in practice did not face the same bureaucratic requirements applied to other religious and humanitarian organizations. However, some Catholic groups, including Catholic Relief Services, reported similar bureaucratic problems in obtaining exoneration from duties on donated goods. The Government published additional, more specific guidelines in April and June 1999 in an attempt to address these problems, but the issue remained controversial.

### *Religious Demography*

Over 90 percent of the population belong to one of the Christian denominations. According to the most recent census, conducted in 1995, 72.9 percent of the population were members of the Roman Catholic Church, 15.1 percent were members of evangelical churches, 1.5 percent were members of the Moravian Church, and 0.1 percent were members of the Episcopal Church. An additional 1.9 percent were associated with other churches or religious groups, and 8.5 percent professed no religious affiliation or were atheistic. Some more recent church figures differ from the official census information; for example, the Episcopal Church claims a membership of nearly twice the census figure, and the evangelical churches also have made credible claims of higher current membership.

The total number of citizens who practice a religion other than Christianity is extremely small. There are small communities of non-Christians, including a small Jewish community that gathers for religious holidays and Friday evening dinners but does not have an ordained rabbi or a synagogue. In 1979 many of the country's approximately 250 Jews fled abroad in the face of persecution and imprisonment by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The FSLN bombed and partially destroyed the country's only synagogue, then confiscated the property shortly afterward and converted it into a youth training camp. There is now a funeral home on the site. Some Jews have returned since the Sandinista Government was ousted democratically in 1990, but the total Jewish population of the country consists of fewer than 50 persons.

There is a small number of Muslims as well—primarily foreigners, or naturalized Nicaraguans from Iran, Libya, and Palestine who immigrated to Nicaragua in the 1980's—but there is no mosque.

Minority religions also include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Amish and Mennonite communities, the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Scientology. Although these religions are perceived as foreign, the Government neither monitors them nor alerts the public to their presence.

Other immigrant groups include the "Turcos"—Palestinian Christians whose ancestors came to Central America in the early 1900's, and the Chinese, who came to the country in large numbers shortly after World War II but many of whom fled at the time of the 1979 revolution. Chinese-Nicaraguans either arrived as Christians or converted to Christianity, and intermarried frequently with native Nicaraguans.

There are no longer any pre-Colombian religions in the country, although there is a "freedom movement" within some Moravian churches to allow indigenous Amerindian spiritual expression, often through music. The Catholic Church is the most syncretistic of the denominations and does not criticize or interfere with non-Christian aspects of religious festivals held in its name. For example, each August up to 30,000 Nicaraguans—many of them painted red or coated in motor oil—gather to carry "Dominguito," a sacred 10-inch statue of Saint Dominic, from his home church in a suburb of Managua to another church downtown. A week later the revelers reconvene to carry the statue back. Such events have historical roots that go back to pre-Colombian times.

Geographically, Moravian and Episcopal communities are concentrated on the Atlantic coast, whereas Catholicism and evangelical churches dominate the Pacific and central regions. There is a strong correlation between ethnicity and religion: blacks and Amerindians, generally from the Atlantic coast, are more likely to belong to the Moravian or Episcopal Church. Some evangelical churches have focused on the booming, remote towns of the central South Atlantic Region and have a strong presence there.

The evangelical churches are growing rapidly, especially in poor and/or remote areas. For example, in 1980 the Assemblies of God had 80 churches and fewer than 5,000 members. According to church leader Saturnino Cerato, they now have 700 churches and approximately 70,200 baptized members.

Anecdotal evidence points to proportionally higher church attendance among members of the new evangelical churches than among members of the Catholic and traditional Protestant churches. In the poorer neighborhoods, the small evangelical churches are filled to capacity nearly every evening. According to a Catholic Church official, the Catholic Church is growing numerically but losing ground proportionally.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country. The Mormons have 178 missionaries, the Unification Church has 6 families of missionaries, and nearly all of the non-Catholic denominations have at least 1 missionary family in the country. Missionaries do not face any special requirements other than the appropriate visa—the "religious worker" visa—which is given freely to everyone who follows the application guidelines. The process of obtaining a religious worker visa takes several months

and must be completed before the missionary arrives in the country. During the period covered by this report, there were no reports of difficulties by missionaries in obtaining the proper visa.

Private religious schools operate in the country. The Government provides financial support to a number of primary and secondary schools owned and directed by the Catholic Church by paying the salaries of teachers at these schools.

The Government does not take steps to promote inter-faith understanding, nor does it sponsor inter-faith dialog.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religions are very different on the two coasts. On the Atlantic side, where the three dominant churches are the Moravian, Episcopal and Catholic Churches, there is an ecumenical spirit. The churches are even known to celebrate the Eucharist together. However, on the Pacific side, ecumenicism is rare. Instead there is continuing and energetic competition for adherents between the Catholic Church and the evangelical churches.

Both the Catholic bishops and the leading evangelical leaders made public statements during the period covered by this report indicating a desire to work together more closely, but they generally have not done so in practice.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights, and also maintains a regular dialog with the principal religious leaders and organizations.

## PANAMA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, with some qualifications; however, the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for free exercise of all religious beliefs, provided that "Christian morality and public order" are respected; however, despite the qualified nature of this right, the Government generally respects religious freedom in practice.

The Constitution recognizes Roman Catholicism as "the religion of the majority of Panamanians" but does not designate the Roman Catholic Church as the official state religion. The Constitution provides that religious associations have "juridical capacity" and are free to manage and administer their property within the limits prescribed by the law, the same as other "juridical persons." The Ministry of Government and Justice grants "juridical personality" through a relatively simple, transparent process that does not appear to prejudice religious institutions. Juridical personality allows a religion to apply for the full array of tax benefits available to nonprofit organizations. There were no reports of cases in which religious organizations were denied juridical personality or the associated tax benefits.

Roman Catholicism's numerical predominance and "unofficial" recognition by the Constitution generally has not prejudiced other religions. However, Catholicism does enjoy certain statesanctioned advantages over other faiths. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Panama—but no other religious leader—enjoys privileges and immu-

nities usually reserved for government officials. Catholic religious workers from outside the country benefit from a streamlined administrative process that grants them 5-year work permits. Other foreign religious workers must pass through a more arduous application process and must renew their work permits on a yearly basis.

#### *Religious Demography*

According to a nationwide survey conducted in June, 1998, by the Comptroller General's Office of Statistics and Census, 82 percent of the population identify themselves as Roman Catholic, 10 percent as evangelicals, and 3 percent as unaffiliated with any religious group. There are also small but statistically identifiable congregations of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Episcopalians, and other Christians. Many recent Chinese immigrants still practice Buddhism. The country has small but influential Jewish and Muslim communities, and is home to one of the world's seven Baha'i Houses of Worship.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Although foreign Roman Catholic workers enjoy an advantageous work permit regime, many other religious organizations also have foreign religious workers in Panama. For example, as of June 1, 1999, the Southern Baptist Convention had 22 foreign missionaries in Panama, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) had 197. However, the Immigration and Naturalization Service no longer grants religious worker visas or work permits to members of the Unification Church. Officials based their decision on allegedly deceptive religious worker visa applications, as well as certain Unification Church practices (such as mass marriages) that officials believed ran contrary to the constitutional requirement that religious conduct respect Christian morality. The Unification Church has not appealed the decision.

Foreign missionaries are granted temporary 3-month religious worker visas upon submitting required paperwork, which includes an AIDS test and a police certificate of good conduct. A 1-year extension customarily is granted with the submission of additional, less onerous, documentation. Foreign religious workers who intend to remain in Panama more than 15 months must repeat the entire process. Such additional extensions usually are granted.

The Constitution dictates that Catholicism be taught in public schools, although parents have the right to exempt their children from religious instruction.

The Constitution disadvantages ministers of religious faiths in general by strictly limiting the type of public offices they may hold. The Constitution prohibits clerics from holding public office, except as related to social assistance, education, or scientific research.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the different, mostly Christian, faiths are generally harmonious. The Roman Catholic Church, despite losing membership through growing defections to evangelical and other Christian churches, generally has not reacted defensively. Similarly, most Protestant groups active in the country are not militantly anti-Catholic. Aggressive evangelical Protestant criticism of "new" religions, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) is not widespread.

For the past 16 years, mainstream denominations, including the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Methodist Churches, have participated in a successful ecumenical movement directed by the nongovernmental Panamanian Ecumenical Committee. The Committee sponsors interreligious conferences to discuss matters of faith and practice and plans joint liturgical celebrations and charitable projects. In conjunction with the University of Santa Maria la Antigua, the Committee sponsors the Institute for Ecumenism and Society, which conducts its own conferences and issues ecumenical publications. The Ecumenical Committee is also a member of the Panamanian Civil Society Assembly, an umbrella group of civic organizations that conducts informal governmental oversight and has been the driving force behind ethical pacts on the treatment of women and youth, civil society, responsible journalism, and decentralization.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officials also have met with religious leaders to discuss human rights and the promotion of democracy and civil society.

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**PARAGUAY**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion for all persons and recognizes no official religion; the Government respects this right in practice.

All religious groups must be registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture, but the Government imposes no controls on these groups and many informal churches exist.

*Religious Demography*

Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion, but all persons are free to worship as they choose. The Catholic Church is involved in politics at the fringe, mostly in socio-economic matters, and does not support any particular political party. The Church freely criticizes the Government. There are active Catholic, mainline Protestant, evangelical Christian, Jewish (both Orthodox and Reform congregations), Mormon, Muslim, and Baha'i communities in the country. There also are sizable Mennonite communities, whose members originally came to the country in order to escape religious persecution. These communities came to the country in several waves between 1880 and 1950.

The Government is secular. Most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote inter-faith understanding. Adherence to a particular creed confers no legal advantage or disadvantage, and foreign and local missionaries proselytize freely.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While there is no large-scale ecumenical movement in the country, all religious groups freely exercise their beliefs in a largely tolerant environment. The Catholic Church often performs Mass for government functions, Protestant and evangelical churches engage in marches and prayer vigils, and part of the Jewish community holds a large public menorah lighting every year for Hannukah.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The U.S. Ambassador and embassy officials meet regularly with representatives of different religious groups.

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## PERU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, preferential treatment given to the Catholic Church in education, tax benefits, and other areas continued to raise concerns about potential infringements of religious liberties of non-Catholics.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedoms during the period covered by this report.

Relations between members of the various religions generally are amicable.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Although the Constitution establishes the separation of church and state, it also acknowledges the Roman Catholic Church "as an important element in the historical, cultural, and moral development" of the nation. The dominant status accorded to Roman Catholicism in public life manifests itself in various ways. For example, it is traditional for the President to attend Mass on the occasion of the country's Independence Day, and swearing-in ceremonies for cabinet ministers and other officials are conducted with the crucifix in full view. Moreover, there are four areas in which Roman Catholicism, the Catholic Church, and Catholic clergy receive preferential treatment and tangible benefits from the State: education, taxation of personal income, remuneration, and taxation of institutional property.

Religious denominations or churches are not required to register with the Government or apply for a license. Nevertheless, there is a small Religious Affairs Unit within the Ministry of Justice whose primary purpose is to receive institutional complaints of discrimination among the various churches. This Religious Affairs Unit also ensures that beyond the historic preferences (subsidies and exemptions granted to the Catholic Church only), all denominations and churches receive a variety of lesser financial benefits on an equal basis, such as exemption from certain import taxes and customs duties for which they are eligible.

#### *Religious Demography*

According to the 1993 census, of an overall population of 22,048,356, 88.9 percent declared themselves to be Catholics. These included substantial numbers of individuals of syncretistic faiths, who, for example, combine worship of the Catholic Church's saints with worship of non-Christian concepts, such as mother earth and mountain spirits. About 7.3 percent reported that they were non-Catholic Christians, including evangelical Christians (such as Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and members of the Assemblies of God, the Christian Missionary Alliance, the Evangelical Church of Peru, and the Church of God). This 7.3 percent also includes non-evangelical Christians (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Israelites). Israelites base their beliefs and practices on the Old Testament. Adherents of non-Christian religions, including Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Shintoists accounted for 0.3 percent of the population, while agnostics and atheists constituted 1.4 percent of the population. The remaining census respondents specified no religious preferences. According to a respected university researcher who recently has studied the country's religious profile, evangelical Christians represent the fastest-growing religious segment within the population, while an official of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action estimates that only about 15 percent of the nation's Catholics attend church services on a regular weekly basis.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Although teaching about Roman Catholicism has not been required in the public school system since the education reforms of the 1970's, most schools devote 1 hour a week to such study. Prior to 1977, religious courses in public and private primary and secondary schools were interdenominational. Since 1977 public primary and secondary schools have offered only teaching about Catholicism, although some non-Catholic private schools provided non-Catholic religion courses. In April 1998, the Government issued an executive order that established basic Catholic religion courses for all public and private primary school students.

Traditionally, school authorities appoint religious education teachers, upon individual recommendations by the presiding bishop of the local diocese. In November



1999, the Education Ministry issued a directive to implement a September 1998 decree that made it mandatory for religion teachers to have the approval of the presiding bishop. Parents who do not wish their children to participate in the prescribed religion classes are asked to submit a written request for an exemption to the school principal. Non-Catholics who wish their children to receive a religious education in their own particular faith are free to organize such classes, during the weekly hour allotted by the school for religious education, but must supply their own teacher. The Freedom of Conscience Institute (PROLIBCO), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that favors the strict separation of church and state and opposes the preferential treatment accorded to the Catholic religion, objects to the requirement for Catholic teaching in the school curriculum, and claims that the alternatives made available to non-Catholic parents violate the constitutional protection of the privacy and confidentiality of one's convictions and beliefs.

PROLIBCO and other religious groups have challenged mandatory teaching of Roman Catholicism, and their case is pending before the Supreme Court. The case alleges that the mandatory catechism requirement violates the rights of non-Catholic students to practice their personal religious convictions. They also have challenged the practice in which parents must ask school directors for permission to excuse their children from mandatory religion courses and then pay for their own teacher during the hour per week of religious study.

All work-related earnings of Catholic priests and bishops are exempt from income taxes, while real estate, buildings, and houses owned by the Catholic Church are exempt from property taxes. According to an official of the Catholic Church's Episcopal Commission for Social Action, there are, in addition, two groups of Catholic clergy whose members receive state remuneration over and above the compensation paid to them by the Catholic Church. These include the 52 Catholic bishops as well as those Catholic priests whose ministries are located in towns and villages along the country's frontiers. They are rewarded by the State for their patriotism in helping to populate the most remote areas of the country and in implementing the Government's "fronteras humanas" ("human borders") program. Finally, each diocese receives a monthly institutional subsidy from the Government. According to church officials, none of these payments are substantial. However, PROLIBCO claims that the financial subsidies and tax benefits provided by the Government to the Catholic Church and its clergy are far more widespread and lucrative than publicly acknowledged. PROLIBCO has instituted legal action in the Superior Court of Public Law to eliminate all such preferential treatment. PROLIBCO also has alleged discrimination against non-Catholic groups that must pay import duties and a sales tax on Bibles brought into the country.

Conversion from one religion to another is respected, and missionaries are allowed to enter the country and proselytize.

The Government takes no steps to promote inter-faith understanding or dialog. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

During the country's period of internal conflict from 1980 to 1995, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) terrorist group targeted evangelical churches in particular. The group killed about 750 members of evangelical churches, including about 40 pastors. Sendero Luminoso rejects religion and has been known to threaten and intimidate religious workers. However, during the period covered by this report, there were no reported instances in which security forces, vigilante groups, or terrorists attacked individuals because of their religious beliefs or practices.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between members of the various religions generally are amicable. The Catholic and evangelical churches collaborate closely in the area of human rights.

Since 1995 the Catholic Church (through its Episcopal Commission for Social Action) and the National Evangelical Council of Peru (through its loosely affiliated although independent Peace and Hope Evangelical Association) have conducted joint national campaigns on behalf of prison inmates and innocent prisoners wrongly charged or sentenced for terrorism and treason.

There were occasional reports of incidents of anti-Semitism and discrimination. Jewish community leaders in Lima claim that a number of the capital city's most

prestigious private social clubs historically have refused to accept into their ranks prospective Jewish members.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Ambassador has met with a wide variety of religious leaders, including Juan Luis Cipriani, Archbishop of Lima and Primate of Peru, the president of the Catholic Church's Episcopal Conference, the Archbishop of Callao, as well as leaders of Peru's Jewish community in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy's human rights officer has met with representatives of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action of the Catholic Church, the Peace and Hope Evangelical Association, and the Freedom of Conscience Institute. Embassy representatives also have discussed prison reform and broader human rights issues with officials of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action.

## ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

#### *Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Moravian) but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. There is a Baha'i minority.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any steps to promote inter-faith understanding.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The local Christian council conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have discussed issues or events surrounding religious freedom with government officials when soliciting support for international organization resolutions concerning religious freedom.

## ST. LUCIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

##### *Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist, Baptist, and Methodist) but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. There is a Baha'i minority.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote inter-faith understanding.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

##### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The St. Lucia Christian Council conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

#### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have discussed issues or events surrounding religious freedom with government officials when soliciting support for international organization resolutions concerning religious freedom.

## ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change to the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

##### *Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Christianity (Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist) but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. There are Rastafarian and Baha'i minorities.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote inter-faith understanding.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

There were no confirmed reports that the Government abused religious freedom; however, members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them. However, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect discrimination on the basis of religious belief by authorities or simply enforcement of laws against marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practices.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. However, some members of society do not regard Rastafarianism favorably because of its popular association with drug use. The Christian Council of Churches conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have discussed issues or events surrounding religious freedom with government officials when soliciting support for international organization resolutions concerning religious freedom.

**SURINAME**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no state or otherwise dominant religion. Members of all the various faiths in the country are allowed to worship freely. Religions are not required to register with the Government.

*Religious Demography*

Suriname is an ethnically and religiously diverse nation, with a tradition of religious tolerance. Slightly over one-third of the population traces its ancestry to the Indian subcontinent, another third is of African descent, nearly another third claims Indonesian ancestry, and there are smaller percentages of the population that claim Chinese, Amerindian, Portuguese, Lebanese, and Dutch ancestry. Religious diversity in the country closely parallels the ethnic diversity of the population.

According to government statistics, 45 percent of the population is Christian (23 percent Roman Catholic, 16 percent Moravian, and 6 percent other denominations such as Lutheran, Dutch reformed and the Evangelical Churches), 27 percent is Hindu, 20 percent Muslim, 6 percent follow native religions, and 2 percent claim no faith.

There are no restrictions on foreign missionary workers.

A large number of faiths, including U.S. based church groups, have established missionary programs throughout the country. It is estimated that nearly 90 percent

of the American missionaries are affiliated with the Baptist Church, with a small percentage of followers of the Mormon Church also present. There are several chapters of Freemasons and Druids. In addition to U.S. based groups, there are international groups such as the World Islamic Call Society and the Baha'i Faith. Aside from the standard requirement for an entry visa, missionary workers face no special governmental restrictions. The Government, which plans to develop the interior, has encouraged and, where possible, supported the various groups without showing special preference to any one group in particular.

The governmental educational system subsidizes to a small extent a number of public elementary and secondary schools established and managed by the various religious faiths. While the teachers at the schools are civil servants, and the schools are considered public schools, religious groups provide all funding with the exception of teachers' salaries and a small maintenance stipend.

The Government has encouraged cooperation among the various ethnic groups by, for example, declaring the most important holidays of the major religions to be national holidays.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the country's various religious communities are amicable. Most citizens, especially those living in Paramaribo, celebrate the religious holidays of other groups to varying extents.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels protects this right in full, and does not tolerate abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

To receive tax-exempt donations or gifts of land, religious groups must register with the Government, which requires them to demonstrate that they are nonprofit. Religious groups have the same rights and obligations as most legal entities, whether or not they are registered. They can own land but must pay property taxes, and they can hire employees but must pay for government-mandated employee benefits.

#### *Religious Demography*

There is no dominant faith among the multiethnic population of 1.3 million, which is 40 percent African and 40 percent East Indian; the remainder are of European, Syrian, Lebanese, and Chinese descent. According to the latest official statistics (1990), about 29 percent of the population are practicing or nominally Roman Catholic; 24 percent are Hindu; 6 percent are Muslim; and 31 percent are Protestant (including 11 percent Anglican, 7 percent Pentecostal, 4 percent Seventh-Day Adventist, 3 percent Presbyterian/Congregational, and 3 percent Baptist). A small number

of individuals follow Obeah and other traditional Caribbean religions with African roots; sometimes these are practiced together with other faiths.

The Government is known to monitor closely only one religiously affiliated group, a radical Muslim organization called the Jamaat al Muslimeen, some members of which attempted a coup in 1990. The Government's surveillance has focused on the group's repeated attempts to seize control of state-owned property adjoining its central mosque and on any actions intended to incite revolt.

Foreign missionaries operate relatively freely in the country. They include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Baptists, Mennonites, and Muslims. Missionaries must meet standard requirements for an entry visa, must represent a registered religious group, and cannot remain in the country for more than 3 years. The Mormons maintain the maximum total allowed (30) of foreign missionaries per religious denomination in the country, while other denominations maintain between 5 and 10 foreign missionaries.

The Government subsidizes religious and public schools. It also permits religious instruction in public schools, setting aside a time each week when any religious organization that has an adherent in the school can provide an instructor in its faith. Attendance at these classes is voluntary.

Government officials routinely speak out against religious intolerance and generally take care not to favor any one religion publicly. The Government has set aside public holidays for every religion with significant followings, including Christians, Hindus, and Muslims, as well as for the relatively small number of Baptists.

The Government does not formally sponsor programs that promote inter-faith dialog; however, it supports the activities of the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO), which brings together representatives from most of the country's religions. The IRO, which was formed about 30 years ago by several religious leaders, is called upon routinely to provide the prayer leader for several official events, such as the opening of parliament and of the annual court term.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country's various religious groups peacefully coexist and generally respect each other's beliefs and practices. Followers of one faith often participate in public celebrations of another faith, most notably in the Hindu celebration of Divali. The IRO, which is composed of leaders from all faiths with significant followings except for the Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Mormons (who have not expressed an interest in membership because of doctrinal differences), promotes inter-faith dialog and tolerance through study groups, publications, and cultural and religious shows and exhibitions. No group is excluded from membership in the IRO.

Complaints occasionally are made about the efforts of some groups to proselytize in neighborhoods where another religion is dominant. The most frequent public complaints have been lodged by Hindu religious leaders against evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. Such clashes mirror the racial tensions that at times arise between the Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian communities.

The country's major conservative Hindu organization has pointed out that current law, a legacy of British colonialism, protects only Christian groups from blasphemous libel. The Government has proposed legislation that would extend that protection to non-Christians. To date, Parliament has not yet approved legislation extending blasphemous libel to non-Christian groups.

In August 1999, the Orisa Marriage Act of 1999 was enacted by Parliament. This bill allows registered marriage officers of Orisa faith to conduct marriages, which are recognized as legally binding by the Government. Previously only Christian, Hindu, and Moslem prelates could be licensed marriage officers.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## URUGUAY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is a strict separation of church and state, which dates to the beginning of the century. Under the influence of reformist President Jose Batlle y Ordóñez, religious instruction in the schools was banned in 1909, and separation of church and state was included in the 1917 Constitution and reaffirmed in the current 1967 Constitution. All religions are entitled to receive tax exemptions on their houses of worship, and there were no reports of difficulties in receiving these exemptions. Houses of worship must register to get tax exemptions. In order to do so, a religion or minority religious group must register as a nonprofit entity and draft organizing statutes. They then apply to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which examines the legal entity and grants religious status. The group must reapply every 5 years. Once they have status granted to them by the Ministry, they can request an exemption each year from the taxing body, which is usually the municipal government.

#### *Religious Demography*

Among the country's population of 3.2 million persons, about 52 percent of the population are practicing or nominally Roman Catholic, 16 percent are Protestant or other Christian, approximately 1 percent are Jewish, and 30 percent are members of other religions or profess no religion. According to a 1978 survey, among the Catholic majority, only a small percentage attend Mass regularly.

The mainstream Protestant minority is composed primarily of Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Baptist Churches. Other denominations and groups include evangelicals, Pentecostals, Mennonites, Eastern Orthodox, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) claims 65,000 members. There are approximately 30,000 practicing members of the Jewish faith in the country who support 15 synagogues.

A 1998 poll revealed that 13 percent of the population identified themselves as atheists or agnostics, with a significant percentage identifying themselves as deists. Some of the country's 6 percent African-Uruguayan population, primarily those with roots in Brazil, practice animism.

The Unification Church is active in the country and has major property holdings. There also is a Muslim population that lives primarily on the border with Brazil. Approximately 4,000 Baha'i live in Montevideo.

The Government does not take any steps to promote inter-faith understanding.

The public schools allow students who belong to minority religions to miss school for religious holidays without penalty.

Many Christian groups perform missionary work in the country without hindrance from the State. The Mormons, for example, have approximately 350 missionaries in the country at any one time. Missionaries face no special requirements or restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable. The Christian-Jewish Council meets regularly to promote inter-faith understanding. In addition, the mainstream Protestant religions meet regularly among themselves and with the Catholic Church.

Isolated neo-Nazi elements have carried out occasional, limited attacks since 1997. In August 1999, an intensive police investigation resulted in the arrest of eight members (including one minor) of a very small neo-Nazi group suspected of creating racist and anti-Semitic Internet websites. The authorities charged five of the suspects with subversive association; two also were charged with inciting hate or violence toward a particular group. Pending the court's final decision in the case, the defendants were released after serving approximately three months of imprisonment, the minimum statutory penalty for first offenders in cases of this nature.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

During the period covered by this report, embassy staff members met with human rights and religious nongovernmental organizations and with leaders of many of the religious communities, including representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish community, and Mormon and Protestant leaders.

The Embassy maintains frequent contact with religious and nonreligious organizations that are involved in the protection of human rights, such as the Center for Documentation, Investigation, and Social and Pastoral Promotion (OBSUR), Service of Peace and Justice (SERPAJ), Ecumenical Service for Human Dignity (SEOHU), Institute for Legal and Social Studies of Uruguay (ILSUR), and Mundo Afro, which represents the interests of citizens of African descent.

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**VENEZUELA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The country's previous Constitution provided for freedom of religion, as long as the practice of a religion did not threaten public order or violate good custom; the new Constitution, proclaimed on December 30, 1999, provides for freedom of religion, on the condition that the practice of a religion does not violate public morality, decency, and the public order, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The Directorate of Justice and Religion (DJR) in the Ministry of Interior and Justice, which replaced the Office of Religion in an executive branch reorganization, is the government office responsible for maintaining a registry of religious groups, disbursing funds to the Roman Catholic Church, facilitating the travel of missionaries and religious officials, and promoting awareness and understanding among the various religious communities. Each local church must register with the DJR in order to hold legal status as a religious organization and to own property. The requirements for registration are largely administrative. However, some groups have complained that the process of registration is slow and inefficient. In 1964 the Government and the Holy See signed a concordat that underscores the country's historical ties to the Roman Catholic Church and provides government subsidies to the Church, including to its social programs and schools. The Government annually provides over \$1.5 million (approximately 1.1 billion bolivars) in subsidies to the Catholic Church's schools and social programs. Other religious groups are free to establish and run their own schools, which do not receive subsidies from the Government.



### *Religious Demography*

According to the latest government figures, in 2000, approximately 70 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, approximately 29 percent are Protestant, and the remaining 1 percent practice other religions or are atheists. There are small but influential Muslim and Jewish communities. The capital city of Caracas has a large mosque, and the country's Jewish community is very active. According to the Government, Protestant churches are the country's most rapidly growing religious community.

There are approximately 4,000 foreign missionaries working in the country. Foreign missionaries require a special visa to enter the country, which is obtained through the DJR. Missionaries are not refused entry generally, but many complain that the DJR often takes months or years to process a request.

### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

On several occasions, the Roman Catholic Church has been monitored or threatened by state agents for political reasons.

In November 1999, Catholic Bishop Roberto Luckert of Coro reportedly spoke against the new Constitution on his diocese's radio station. The next day, two military intelligence agents allegedly visited the station, accused its manager of opposing the political process, and warned that they would be monitoring and recording future broadcasts.

In April 2000, Monsignor Baltazar Porras, the president of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference of Venezuela (CEV) publicly criticized the Government regarding a lack of electoral transparency, the lack of political diversity of the National Electoral Council, and the need for monitoring the upcoming electoral process. He also criticized the Government's rejection of some international aid during devastating floods at the end of 1999, growing social instability, and the supraconstitutional activities of the National Legislative Commission. Following these criticisms, the press reported that the State Political Police (DISIP) videotaped a Mass said by Monsignor Porras. The Director of DISIP immediately apologized, the agent was suspended, and the national Ombudsman's office opened an investigation of the incident. Bishops also reported receiving telephone threats during the CEV's assembly.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable.  
There are numerous ecumenical groups throughout the country.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains close contacts with the various religious communities and meets periodically with the DJR. The Ambassador meets regularly with religious authorities and the Embassy facilitates communication between U.S. religious groups and the Government. The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.



## EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

### AUSTRALIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICY ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. A provision of the Constitution precludes the adoption of a state religion. Minority religions are given equal rights to land, status, and building of places of worship.

##### *Religious Demography*

According to the 1996 census, 71 percent of citizens consider themselves to be Christian, including 27 percent Roman Catholic, 22 percent Anglican, and 22 percent other Christian denominations. During the first census in 1911, 96 percent of citizens identified themselves as Christian. Traditional Christian denominations have seen their total number and proportion of affiliates stagnate or decrease significantly since the 1950's. Of the Christian denominations, Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses showed the largest increase in members from 1991 to 1996, 16 percent and 12 percent respectively. In 1996 17 percent of citizens considered themselves to have no religion, a 35 percent increase from 1991.

At the time of the European settlement of Australia, aboriginal inhabitants followed religions that were animistic in nature, involving belief in spirits behind the forces of nature and the influence of ancestral spirit beings. Aboriginal beliefs and spirituality, even among those aborigines who identify themselves as members of a traditional organized religion, are intrinsically linked to the land generally and to certain sites of significance in particular. According to the 1996 census, 2 percent of Aborigines and 0.04 percent of all citizens practice traditional indigenous religions. Almost 72 percent of Aborigines practice some form of Christianity, while 16 percent list no religion. The percentage of Aborigines who practice Christianity and who list no religion mirrors almost exactly the percentages in the wider community.

Recent increased immigration from Southeast Asia and the Middle East has expanded considerably the numbers of citizens who identify themselves as Buddhists and Muslims, about 200,000 and 68,000 respectively. Affiliates of non-Christian religions, while only 3.5 percent of the population, have shown the largest increases in members since the 1991 census. Stated affiliation with Hinduism increased by 55 percent, with Buddhism by 43 percent, with Islam by 36 percent, and with Judaism by 8 percent. These changes have resulted partly from trends in immigration. In 1996 48 percent of those who had arrived in the country since 1991 were Christians, 23 percent had no religion, 8 percent were affiliated with Buddhism, 8 percent with Islam, and 1 percent with Judaism.

The Government has put in place extensive programs to promote public acceptance of diversity and multicultural pluralism, although none are focused specifically on religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In a 1998 report on freedom of religion and belief in Australia by the federally funded but independent Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the Commission stated that "despite the legal protections that apply in different jurisdictions, many Australians suffer discrimination on the basis of religious belief or non-belief, including members of both mainstream and non-mainstream religions and those of no religious persuasion." Many non-Christian adherents have complained to the HREOC that the overwhelming dominance of traditional Christianity in civic life has the potential to marginalize large numbers of citizens. However, they have not presented any concrete evidence of such marginalization. Persons who suffer discrimination on the basis of religion may resort to the court system, which is an effective method of obtaining redress.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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**BRUNEI**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government imposes some restrictions on non-Islamic faiths.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The official religion is Islam, as practiced by the Shafeite school. Other religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism also are practiced; however, non-Muslims are not allowed to proselytize, nor are parochial schools allowed to teach the religions of their respective faiths. However, government and most private schools are required to teach courses on Islam.

Brunei describes its government as a Malay Islamic monarchy. The Government actively promotes adherence to Islamic values and traditions by its Muslim residents. The Ministry of Religious Affairs deals solely with Islam and Islamic laws, which exist alongside secular laws, and apply only to Muslims. During the period covered by this report, officials mainly focused on promoting the sale and consumption of halal products, enforcing the ban on the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and guarding against the distribution and sale of items that feature undesirable photographs or religious symbols.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution states that, "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafeite sect of that religion: Provided that all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the person professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam." However, the Government only partially respects these rights, as it imposes some restrictions on non-Islamic religions.

*Religious Demography*

The Government does not publish detailed data on religious affiliation. The majority of citizens are Muslim Malays. About 20 percent of the population are ethnic Chinese, of which about half are Christians (Anglicans, Catholics, and Methodists); the other half are Buddhists. There is also a large foreign-born workforce of Filipinos and Europeans, the majority of whom are Christians, and Indians, who are predominantly Hindus.

The Brunei-Muara district, including the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, has over 50 mosques and suraus (Islamic prayer rooms), but there are only 2 churches and 1 Buddhist temple. There is no Hindu temple.

The Government requires residents to carry an identity card that states the bearer's religion, and all visitors must complete a landing card that requests information on religion.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

In 1991 the Government began to reinforce the legitimacy of the hereditary monarchy and the observance of traditional and Muslim values by reasserting a national ideology known as the Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) or "Malay Islamic Monarchy," the genesis of which reportedly dates back to the 15th century. In 1993 the Government participated in issuing the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which affirms the right of all persons to a wide range of human rights, including freedom of religion. Despite this and the constitutional provisions providing for the full and unconstrained exercise of religious freedom, the Government restricts the practice of non-Muslim religions by: routinely prohibiting proselytizing of Moslems; occasionally denying entry to foreign clergy or particular priests, bishops, or ministers; banning the importation of religious teaching materials or scriptures such as the Bible; and refusing permission to expand, repair, or build new churches, temples, or shrines. However, in February 1998, the Government allowed the Roman Catholic Church to establish the first apostolic prefecture in the country and to install a citizen of Chinese origin as the country's first apostolic prefect. This development marked a modest improvement in religious freedom.

The Government sporadically voiced alarm about "outsiders" preaching radical Islamic fundamentalist or unorthodox beliefs. (The Al-Arqam movement was banned in 1995 and remains banned.) Citizens deemed to have been influenced by such preaching (usually students returning from overseas study) have been "shown the error of their ways" in study seminars organized by mainstream Islamic religious leaders. Moreover, the Government does not hesitate to investigate and to use its internal security apparatus against these purveyors of radical Islam.

In September 1998, officials of the Islamic Propagation Center confiscated gold and other precious Buddhist and Christian icons from a number of goldsmiths in the capital, stating that the open display of these items "offended local sensitivities." The confiscations were made under the Undesirable Publications Act, which gives the Government wide-ranging powers. Several days later, the goldsmiths were informed that they could recover their property from the Ministry of Home Affairs, which they did without difficulty, provided that their documentation was correct. The Government also routinely censors magazine articles on other faiths, blacking out or removing photographs of crucifixes and other Christian religious symbols.

Religious affairs authorities continue to raid illegal night spots and to monitor restaurants and supermarkets to ensure conformity with "halal" practices such as Islamic requirements covering the slaughter of animals and the ban on pork products. The actions generally are regarded by the majority of citizens as a means of upholding Islam.

While requiring courses on Islam or the MIB in all schools, the Ministry of Education has restricted the teaching of the history of religion or other courses on religion, in particular, Christianity, in non-Islamic schools. Only the Brunei International School presently is exempted from these restrictions, and it does not offer instruction in any religion. The Jerudong International School offers an optional Islamic Studies course. The Ministry requires that all students, including non-Muslims, follow a course of study on the Islamic faith and learn the jawi (Arabic script). Private mission schools are not allowed to give Christian instruction and are required to give instruction about Islam; however, the Government does not prohibit or restrict parents from giving religious instruction to children in their own homes. In January 2000, the Government responded to objections from parents and religious leaders and set aside tentative plans to require that more Islamic courses be taught in private, non-Islamic parochial schools. In government schools and at the national university, Muslim and non-Muslim female students must wear Muslim attire, including a head covering as a part of their "uniform."

Since proselytizing by faiths other than official Islam is not permitted, there are no missionaries working in the country.

There is no government-sponsored ecumenical activity.

The installation of the country's first apostolic prefect constituted a modest step in the direction of improved religious freedom, but as yet there is no broad trend toward increased religious freedom.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general those adhering to faiths other than Islam are allowed to practice their beliefs, provided that they exercise restraint and do not proselytize. There is little reported dialog among the country's religious leaders and their counterparts in the Christian and Buddhist religions. The country's national philosophy, the Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) concept, discourages open-mindedness to other religions, and there are no programs to promote understanding of religions other than Islam. The country's indigenous people generally convert either to Islam or Christianity but rarely to Buddhism. Consequently, Muslim officials view Christianity as the main rival to official Islam.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of encouraging the growth of rudimentary democratic institutions. The Embassy has good relations with officials from the Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist faiths.

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**BURMA**

Burma has been ruled since 1962 by highly repressive, authoritarian military regimes, and since 1998, when the armed forces brutally suppressed massive pro-democracy demonstrations, a junta composed of senior military officers has ruled by decree, without a constitution or legislature. The most recent Constitution, promulgated in 1974, permitted both legislative and administrative restrictions on religious freedom, stating that "the national races shall enjoy the freedom to profess their religion provided that the enjoyment of any such freedom does not offend the laws or the public interest." Most adherents of all religions duly registered with the authorities generally enjoyed freedom to worship as they chose; however, the Government imposed some restrictions on certain religious minorities. In addition the Government systematically restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom, and coercively promoted Buddhism over other religions in some ethnic minority areas.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The Government imposed some restrictions on the religious freedom of both Christian and Islamic groups, and individual Christians and Muslims experienced some discrimination by the State. The Government monitored the activities of members of all religions, including Buddhism, in part because clergy and congregation members in the past have become active politically.

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy towards Burma has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Burma a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

Burma has been ruled since 1962 by highly authoritarian military regimes. In 1997 the junta reorganized itself and changed its name from the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The military has governed without a constitution or legislature since 1988. The most recent Constitution, promulgated in 1974, permitted both legislative and administrative restrictions on religious freedom, stating that "the national races shall enjoy the freedom to profess their religion provided that the enjoyment of any such freedom does not offend the laws or the public interest." Most adherents of all religions duly registered with the authorities generally enjoyed freedom to worship as they chose; however, the Government imposed some restrictions on certain religious minorities. In addition, in practice, the Government systematically restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom, and, ac-

According to numerous credible reports, government authorities in some ethnic minority areas coercively promoted Buddhism over other religions, particularly among members of the minority ethnic groups.

There is no official state religion; however, the Government continued to show a preference for Theravada Buddhism in practice. Successive Governments, civilian and military, have supported and associated themselves conspicuously with Buddhism.

Virtually all organizations must be registered with the Government. Although there is a government directive exempting "genuine" religious organizations from registration, in practice only registered organizations can buy or sell property or open bank accounts, which induces most religious organizations to register. Religious organizations register with the Ministry of Home Affairs with the endorsement of the Ministry for Religious Affairs. However, at least one religiously-affiliated organization was allowed to open a bank account with the endorsement of the Myanmar Council of Churches instead of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The State also provides some utilities, such as electricity, at preferential rates to recognized religious organizations.

#### *Religious Demography*

The great majority of the country's population at least nominally follows Theravada Buddhism, although in practice popular Burmese Buddhism includes veneration of many indigenous pre-Buddhist deities called "nats" and coexists with astrology, numerology, and fortune-telling. Buddhist monks, including novices, number more than 300,000, roughly 2 percent of the male Buddhist population, and depend for their material needs entirely on alms donated by the laity, including daily donations of food. The clergy also includes a much smaller number of nuns.

There are minorities of Christians (mostly Baptists as well as some Catholics and Anglicans), Muslims (mostly Sunni), Hindus, and practitioners of traditional Chinese and indigenous religions. According to government statistics, almost 90 percent of the population practice Buddhism, 4 percent practice Christianity, and 4 percent practice Islam; however, these statistics may understate the non-Buddhist proportion of the population.

The country is ethnically diverse, and there is some correlation between ethnicity and religion. Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion among the majority Burman ethnic group, and among the Shan and Mon ethnic minorities of the eastern region. In much of the country there also is some correlation between religion and social class, in that non-Buddhists tend to be better educated in secular matters, more urbanized, and more commercially oriented than the Buddhist majority.

Christianity is the dominant religion among the Kachin ethnic group of the northern region and the Chin and Naga ethnic groups of the western region (some of which practice traditional indigenous religions); it also is widely practiced among the Karen and Karenni ethnic groups of the southern and eastern regions. Many other Karen and Karenni are Theravada Buddhists. Hinduism is practiced chiefly by Indians, mostly Tamils and Bengalis, who are concentrated in major cities and in the south-central region (although many Tamils are Catholic). Islam is practiced widely in Arakan Division on the west coast, where it is the dominant religion of the Rohingya minority, and among Indians and Bengalis and their descendants. The small Chinese ethnic minorities practice traditional Chinese religions. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced widely among smaller ethnic groups in the northern regions and persist widely in popular Buddhist practice, especially in rural areas. There are no reliable statistics on religious affiliation and ethnicity.

Since independence in 1948, many of the ethnic minority areas have been bases for armed resistance to the State. Although most armed ethnic groups have negotiated cease-fire agreements with the Government since 1989, active Shan, Karen and Karenni insurgencies continue, and a Chin insurgency has developed since the late 1980's. Successive civilian and military governments have tended to view religious freedom in the context of threats to national unity.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government continued both to show preference for Theravada Buddhism, the majority religion, and to control the organization and restrict the activities and expression of its clergy ("sangha"). The Government prohibits any organizations of Buddhist clergy other than nine state-recognized monastic orders, which submit to the authority of a state-sponsored State Clergy Coordination Committee ("Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee"—SMNC) elected indirectly by monks. The Government provides guidance and enforcement for the committee at the national level and for its subordinate bodies at local levels. The Government continued to fund two State Sangha Universities in Rangoon and Mandalay to train Buddhist clergy under the

control of the SMNC. The State's relations with the Buddhist clergy and Buddhist schools are handled chiefly by the Department for the Perpetuation and Propagation of the Sasana (DPPS—"Sasana" means Buddhist doctrine) in the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The Government monitored the activities of members of all religions, including Buddhism, in part because clergy and congregation members in the past have become active politically. In 1995 the military Government prohibited the ordination as clergy of any member of a political party. This measure remains in effect. Moreover, there is a concentration of Christians among some of the ethnic minorities against which the army has fought for decades, although many of the ethnic insurgencies have been waged by groups that practice Buddhism.

At the same time, the Government, apparently in order to bolster its legitimacy among the Buddhist majority, discriminated against members of minority religions and restricted the educational, proselytizing, and building activities of minority religious groups.

Christians and Muslims experienced difficulties in obtaining permission to build places of worship and in importing indigenous-language translations of traditional sacred texts. Through the 1990's, the Government increasingly has made special efforts to link itself with Buddhism as a means of asserting its own popular legitimacy. State-controlled news media continued frequently to depict or describe junta members paying homage to Buddhist monks, making donations at pagodas throughout the country, officiating at ceremonies to open, improve, restore or maintain pagodas, and organizing ostensibly voluntary "people's donations" of money, food, and uncompensated labor to build or refurbish Buddhist religious shrines throughout the country. State-owned newspapers routinely featured, as front-page banner slogans, quotations from the Buddhist scriptures. Buddhist doctrine remained part of the state-mandated curriculum in all elementary schools; however, individual children may opt out of instruction in Buddhism, and sometimes do so in practice. The Government has published books of Buddhist religious instruction. The Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a government-sponsored mass organization in which participation often is not entirely voluntary, has organized courses in Buddhist culture attended by millions of persons, according to state-owned media reports.

In April 1997, following widespread riots that involved Buddhist clergy, the Government effectively closed the two State Sangha Universities and banned the administration of religious literature examinations required for advancement in the clergy. However, during the period covered by this report, the religious literature examinations were administered again, and in May 2000 it was announced that 48 monks received titles.

During the mid-1990's, the Government funded the construction of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in Rangoon, which opened in December 1998. The ITBMU's stated purpose is "to share Myanmar's knowledge of Buddhism with the people of the world," and the main language of instruction is English.

Government authorities repeatedly prohibited Christian clergy from proselytizing. Local military commanders, who often provide such orders, rarely cite any legal justification for their actions. In general the Government has not allowed permanent foreign religious missions to operate since the mid-1960's, when it expelled nearly all foreign missionaries and nationalized all private schools and hospitals, which were extensive and were affiliated mostly with Christian religious organizations. The Government is not known to have paid any compensation in connection with these extensive confiscations. However, the Government has allowed a few elderly Catholic priests and nuns who have worked in the country since before independence to continue their work. Government authorities usually granted foreign religious representatives visas only for short stays in the country but in some cases permitted them to preach to congregations. Some Christian theological seminaries established before 1962 have continued to operate.

In October 1990, the military junta promulgated Order 6/90, which bans any organization of Buddhist clergy other than the nine orders constituting the SMNC; Order 7/90, which authorizes military commanders to try Buddhist clergy before military tribunals for "activities inconsistent with and detrimental to Buddhism;" and Decree 20/90, "Law Concerning Sangha Organizations," which imposes on Buddhist clergy a code of conduct enforced by criminal penalties. These edicts remain in effect.

Christian and Islamic groups continued to have difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches and mosques, particularly on prominent sites. In parts of Chin State, authorities reportedly have not authorized the construction of any new churches since 1997. The Government reportedly has denied permission for



churches to be built on main roads in cities such as Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. In Arakan State reportedly in April 2000, authorities reportedly detained 12 Muslim elders for failing to demolish three mosques in Dodine village. In Rangoon authorities also have instructed Chin and Kachin Christian worship facilities to use the term "religious center" rather than "church." Buddhist groups are not known to have experienced similar difficulties in obtaining permission to build pagodas or monasteries. In most regions of the country, Christian and Muslim groups that seek to build small churches or mosques on side streets or other inconspicuous locations eventually have been able to obtain official permission, despite a generally time-consuming bureaucracy.

Since the 1960's, Christian and Islamic groups have had difficulties in importing religious literature. Religious publications, like secular ones, remained subject to control and censorship. Translations of the Bible and the Koran into indigenous languages could not be imported legally, although Bibles can be printed locally in indigenous languages. During the period covered by this report, there were no reports of Bibles or other religious materials having been confiscated; however, according to the Chin Freedom coalition, in early 1999, 16,000 Bibles were confiscated in Tamu Township. State censorship authorities reportedly object to existing translations of the Bible and the Koran, including some translations that became widely used and accepted by some of the country's Christian and Muslim groups during the colonial period. According to some reports, the censors have objected to the use in Christian or Islamic literature of certain indigenous-language terms long used in Buddhist religious literature; the censors reportedly have maintained that the use of these terms is appropriately limited to Buddhism. According to other reports, the censors have objected to passages of the Old Testament and the Koran that may appear to approve the use of violence against nonbelievers. Although possession of publications not approved by the censors is an offense for which persons have been arrested and prosecuted in recent years, there were no reports of arrests or prosecutions for possession of any traditional religious literature during the period covered by this report.

The Government allowed members of all religious groups to establish and maintain links with coreligionists in other countries and to travel abroad for religious purposes, subject to restrictive passport and visa issuance practices, foreign exchange controls, and the government monitoring that extends to all international activities for any purpose. The Government sometimes expedited its burdensome passport issuance procedures for Muslims making the Hajj.

Religious affiliation sometimes is indicated on government-issued identification cards that citizens and permanent residents of the country are required to carry at all times. There appear to be no consistent criteria governing whether a person's religion is indicated on his or her identification card. Citizens also are required to indicate their religions on some official application forms, e.g., on passports (which have a separate "field" for religion, as well as ethnicity).

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government, which operates a pervasive internal security apparatus, generally infiltrates or monitors the meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious organizations.

During the period covered by this report the Government continued to imprison Buddhist monks who exercised their rights to free speech and association by calling for democracy and political dialog with prodemocracy forces. More than 100 monks credibly have been identified as having been imprisoned during the 1990's for supporting democracy and human rights; however, about half of these have been released, and there is no reliable estimate of the number of Buddhist clergy in prisons or labor camps as of mid-2000. In the past, Buddhist monks reportedly have died in prisons or labor camps run by the Government's Department of Prisons; however, there have been no known reports since 1994. Monks serving sentences of life in prison reportedly included the venerable U Kalyana of Mandalay, a member of the Aung San Red Star Association, and the venerable U Kawiya of the Phayahyi monastery in Mandalay. In Arakan State, authorities reportedly detained 12 Muslim elders for failing to demolish 3 mosques in Dodine village. Two Chin pastors, Reverend Biak Kam and Reverend Thawng Kam of Than Tlang township were detained in October 1999, reportedly in connection with the desertion of a Burmese soldier stationed in Chin State. They later were released.

In May 2000 there were reports that in Pegu and Mandalay security forces arrested or detained a group of monks called the Monk's Union in connection with a February 17, 2000 letter calling for political gatherings on May 26, 2000. The monks reportedly issued a 100-day ultimatum threatening nationwide strikes in the event that dialog between the military regime and the NLD did not occur. During this

time, government authorities publicly warned monasteries in Rangoon and Mandalay against fomenting civil disorder and asked elder monks to admonish the younger monks. For example, a senior military commander lectured abbots and monks at a May 25, 2000 meeting by outlining all of the resources expended by the military Government in support of Buddhism, and indicating that some members of the faith required "purification," because they were conducting acts that were "not proper in the eyes of the public." He requested the senior abbots not to revere any members of religious orders who did not have correct views and urged them to "admonish" those who failed to follow the prescribed code of conduct. On the scheduled weekend, about 100 monks reportedly walked from Rangoon to Mandalay, but no disturbances were reported.

Security forces have destroyed or looted Buddhist temples, churches and mosques in ethnic minority areas. Government security forces continued efforts to induce members of the Chin ethnic minority to convert to Buddhism and prevent Christian Chin from proselytizing by highly coercive means, including religiously selective exemptions from forced labor, and by arresting, detaining, interrogating, and physically abusing Christian clergy. There continued to be credible reports from diverse regions of the country that government officials and security forces compelled persons, especially in rural areas, to contribute money, food, or uncompensated labor to statesponsored projects to build, renovate, or maintain Buddhist religious shrines or monuments. The Government calls these contributions "voluntary donations" and imposes them on both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

Authorities at times also restricted the freedom of movement of clergy. For example, in July 1999, the senior abbots of five monasteries around Mandalay reportedly protested a new order by the regional military command that forbade Buddhist clergy from leaving their township of residence without first surrendering their identity cards and obtaining written permission from local authorities; persons other than Buddhist clergy generally were not subject to such severe restrictions on movement.

Non-Buddhists continued to experience discrimination at upper levels of the public sector. Only one non-Buddhist served in the Government at a ministerial level, and the same person, a brigadier general, is the only non-Buddhist known to have held flag rank in the armed forces during the 1990's. The Government discourages Muslims from entering military service, and Christian or Muslim military officers who aspire to promotion beyond middle ranks are encouraged by their superiors to convert to Buddhism.

The Government ostensibly promotes mutual understanding among practitioners of different religions. Official public holidays include some Christian and Islamic holy days, as well as several Theravada Buddhist holy days. The Government maintains a multireligion monument in downtown Rangoon. In 1998 it announced plans to build a new Multireligion Square on some of the land that it recovered in 1997 by relocating Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim cemeteries in Rangoon's Kyandaw neighborhood, although as of June 2000, construction had not begun yet.

Since 1990 government authorities and security forces have promoted Buddhism over Christianity among the Chin ethnic minority of the western part of the country. Until 1990 the Chin generally practiced either Christianity or traditional indigenous religions. (The Chin were the only major ethnic minority in the country that did not support any significant armed organization in active rebellion against the Government or in an armed cease-fire with the Government. However, Chin opposition groups emerged in 1988 and subsequently developed into active insurgencies against the Government.) Since 1990 government authorities and security forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, coercively have sought to induce Chins to convert to Theravada Buddhism and to prevent Christian Chins from proselytizing Chins who practice traditional indigenous religions. This campaign, reportedly accompanied by other efforts to "Burmanize" the Chin, has involved a large increase in military units stationed in Chin State and other predominately Chin areas, state-sponsored immigration of Buddhist Burman monks from other regions, and construction of Buddhist monasteries and shrines in Chin communities with few or no Buddhists, often by means of forced "donations" of money or labor.

According to multiple credible reports, authorities and security forces promoted Buddhism among the Chin in diverse and often coercive ways. For example, military units repeatedly located their camps on the sites of Christian churches and graveyards, which were destroyed to build these camps; local Chin Christians were forced to assist in these acts of desecration. Local government officials ordered Christian Chins to attend sermons by newly arrived Buddhist monks who disparaged Christianity and promised monthly support payments to individuals and households that converted to Buddhism. Government soldiers stationed in Chin State reportedly were given higher rank and pay if they induced Chin women to marry them and

convert to Buddhism. The authorities reportedly supplied rice to Buddhists at lower prices than to Christians, distributed extra supplies of foodstuffs to Buddhists on Sunday mornings while Christians attended church, and exempted converts to Buddhism from forced labor. It credibly was reported that in Karen State's Pa'an Township army units repeatedly conscripted as porters young men leaving Sunday worship services at some Christian churches, causing young men to avoid church attendance. Soldiers led by officers repeatedly disrupted Christian worship services and celebrations. Chin Christians were forced to "donate" labor to clean and maintain Buddhist shrines. Local government officials separated the children of Chin Christians from their parents under false pretenses of giving them free secular education and allowing them to practice their own religion, while in fact the children were lodged in Buddhist monasteries where they were instructed in and converted to Buddhism without their parents' knowledge or consent. The authorities reportedly subjected Christian sermons to censorship. Government authorities repeatedly prohibited Christian clergy from proselytizing. In the past, soldiers beat Christian clergy who refused to sign statements promising to stop preaching. Two Chin pastors from Than Tlang township were detained in October 1999, reportedly in connection with the desertion of a Burmese soldier stationed in Chin State. They later were released.

There were several credible reports of harassment of Christian churches and pastors in Chin State and in the Chin community elsewhere in connection with the celebration of the 100th year of Christianity among the Chin in 1999.

Since the early 1990's, security forces have torn down or forced villagers to tear down crosses that had been erected outside Chin Christian villages. These crosses often have been replaced with pagodas, sometimes built with forced labor. Many of these crosses had been erected in remembrance of former missionaries from the United States. However, in one case authorities allowed a cross removed from the top of a hill to be rebuilt on the middle of the hill.

After parts of the Aungdawmu Buddhist pagoda in Chin State's Falam Township collapsed in July 1999, Buddhist monks and army authorities reportedly forced Chin villagers, most of whom were not Buddhists, to labor for months without pay to repair it.

While in the 1990's, there were unconfirmed reports of arrests, detentions and imprisonments of Chin pastors, there were no reports of Chin pastors in custody during the period covered by this report.

There were unconfirmed reports of governmental restrictions on the religious freedom of Christians among the Naga ethnic minority in the far northwest of the country. These reports suggested that the Government sought to induce members of the Naga to convert to Buddhism by means similar to those it used to convert members of the Chin to Buddhism. However, reports concerning the Naga, although credible, are less numerous than reports concerning the Chin. Consequently, the status of religious freedom among the Naga is more uncertain than that of religious freedom among the Chin.

During 1999 the first mass exodus of Naga religious refugees from the country occurred. In August 1999, more than 1,000 Christians of the Naga ethnic group, from 8 different villages, reportedly fled the country to India. These Naga reportedly claimed that the army and Buddhist monks tried to force them to convert to Buddhism and had forced them to close churches in their villages, then desecrated the churches.

There were no known reports of government violations of religious freedom in predominantly Christian Kachin State, although Christian groups continued to have difficulty obtaining permission to build new churches. Most of Kachin State was administered by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), under a 1989 cease-fire arrangement with the Government that allows KIO forces to remain armed. By contrast, in the other ethnic minority regions where Christianity is practiced widely, i.e., Karen and Chin States, armed ethnic groups were engaged actively in hostilities against the Government.

Members of the Muslim Rohingya minority in Arakan State, on the country's western coast, continued to experience severe legal, economic, and social discrimination. The Government denies citizenship status to most Rohingyas on the grounds that their ancestors allegedly did not reside in the country at the start of British colonial rule, as required by the country's highly restrictive citizenship law. In 1991 tens of thousands of Rohingyas, according to some reports as many as 300,000 persons, fled from Arakan State into Bangladesh following anti-Muslim violence alleged although not proven to have involved government troops. Many of the 21,000 Rohingya Muslims remaining in refugee camps in Bangladesh have refused to return to Burma because they feared human rights abuses, including religious persecution. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reported that authorities cooper-

ated in investigating isolated incidents of renewed abuse of repatriated citizens. However, returnees complained of severe government restrictions on their ability to travel and to engage in economic activity. Unlike the practice with other foreign persons in the country, these Muslims are not issued a foreign registration card (FRC). They are required to obtain permission from the concerned area authorities whenever they wish to leave their village area. Permission to travel to Rangoon usually is not granted to Rohingya Muslims, but permission can sometimes be obtained through bribery. These extraordinary payments result in limiting travel to the capital to only the wealthiest people. There were credible reports that Muslims in Arakan State continue to be compelled to build Buddhist pagodas as part of the country's forced labor program. These pagodas often are built on confiscated Muslim land. On November 19, 1999, in Arakan State's Maungdaw Township, Myint Tun, director of the state's Buddhist Religious Township Association, accompanied by officials of a local Buddhist religious center, reportedly visited the village of Lower Purma and ordered the village headman to demolish the village's largest and oldest mosque, without citing any reason. During the period covered by this report, Secretary-One of the SPDC, Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, inaugurated a new pagoda in northern Rakhine State that was built on land confiscated from the local Muslims and built with forced Muslim labor.

There were credible reports that during the spring of 1999 anti-Islamic booklets were distributed throughout the country through the USDA, a government-sponsored mass organization. This report followed other reports in recent years of government instigation or toleration of violence against Muslims.

Religious activities and organizations of all faiths are not exempt from broad government restrictions on freedom of expression and association. The Government subjects all publications, including religious publications, to control and censorship. The Government generally prohibits outdoor meetings of more than five persons, including religious meetings.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. However, government restrictions on speech, press, assembly, and movement, including diplomatic travel, make it difficult to obtain timely and accurate information about respect for human rights generally, including freedom of religion. Information about abuses often becomes available only months or years after the events, from refugees who have fled to other countries, from released political prisoners, or from occasional travel inside the country by foreign journalists and scholars.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are social tensions between the Buddhist majority and the Christian and Muslim minorities, due in large part to government preference in practice (although not in law) both for nonBuddhists during British colonial rule and for Buddhists since independence. There is widespread prejudice against Muslims, many of whom are ethnic Indians or Bengalis. Even though the Government reportedly contributed to or instigated anti-Muslim violence in Arakan State in 1991, in Shan State and Rangoon in 1996, and in cities throughout the country in 1997, its reported ability to do so repeatedly reflects widespread prejudice against Muslims, many of whom are ethnic Indians or Bengalis.

Since 1994 when the progovernment Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was organized, there has been armed conflict between the DKBA and the Karen National Union (KNU). Although the DKBA was formed and has operated with government support and guidance and reportedly includes some Christians, and although the KNU includes many Buddhists, this armed conflict between two nongovernmental Karen organizations has had strong religious overtones. During the mid-1990's, when the DKBA captured a village from the KNU, it reportedly was common DKBA practice to interrogate and release Buddhist villagers but to torture Christian villagers and kill them if they refused to convert to Buddhism. DKBA treatment of Christians reportedly improved substantially after the DKBA settled down to administering the regions it had conquered. According to one report, in February 2000, a DKBA unit ordered villagers in Khwet Phoe village to destroy a local mosque after arresting and executing five villagers for supporting the KNU. In April 2000, residents of Kaw Kyaik village in Karen State protested an order from DKBA units to destroy the local mosque.

In October 1999, the Government claimed that members of the Chin National Front (CNF) in Htan Hle village killed Buddhist monk U Thon Nanda and looted a Buddhist monastery. The CNF criticized the killing and denied that it was responsible. In June 2000, the authorities claimed in an unconfirmed report that 28 Karenni National Progressive Party insurgents shot and wounded a Catholic priest, Father Abe Lei, and took 4 other persons hostage on June 17, 2000.

A 1996 incident of lethal violence at a major Buddhist religious shrine remained unresolved. There continued to be no arrest warrants or indictments issued in connection with the bombing, on Christmas day 1996, of a pagoda in Rangoon at which a relic of the Buddha's tooth, then on loan from China, temporarily was lodged. The bombing killed 4 persons and injured 18 others. No organization is known to have claimed responsibility for this bombing.

A reported 1997 desecration of a major Buddhist shrine also remained unresolved. In early March 1997, reports that an ancient and highly venerated image of the Buddha in Mandalay's Maya Myatmuni Pagoda had been broken into, and that large rubies embedded in it had been stolen, contributed to widespread public protest demonstrations by Buddhist monks and laypersons demanding an investigation of the incident. There has been no public judicial inquiry into this reported desecration.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy toward Burma has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. The United States discontinued bilateral aid to the Government, suspended issuance of licenses to export arms to Burma, suspended generalized system of preferences, tariff preference for imports of Burmese origin, and suspended export-import bank financial services in support of U.S. exports to Burma. The U.S. Government also has not provided any overseas private investment organization financial services in support of U.S. investment in Burma, has suspended active promotion of trade with Burma, suspended issuance of visas to high government officials and their immediate family members, banned new investment in Burma by U.S. firms, opposed all assistance to the Government by international financial institutions, and urged the governments of other countries to take similar actions.

The U.S. Government actively supported the decision of the International Labor Organization (ILO), in June 1999, to suspend the Government of Burma from participation in ILO programs, based in part on an August 1998 ILO Commission of Inquiry report that the Government systematically used forced labor for a wide range of civilian and military purposes.

The U.S. Embassy has promoted religious freedom in the overall context of its promotion of human rights generally in numerous contacts with government officials (both informally and through repeated formal demarches), as well as to the public, to representatives of the governments of other countries and of international organizations, to international media representatives, to scholars, and to representatives of U.S. and international businesses. Embassy staff have met repeatedly with leaders of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic religious groups, members of the faculties of schools of theology, and other religious-affiliated organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) as part of their reporting and public diplomacy activities.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Burma a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

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## CAMBODIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religious communities in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government respects this right in practice.

The law requires all religious groups, including Buddhists, to submit applications to the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs in order to construct places of worship and to conduct religious activities. Religious groups have not encountered significant difficulties in obtaining approvals for construction of places of worship, but some Muslim and Christian groups report delays by some local officials in acknowledging that official permission has been granted to conduct religious meetings in homes. Such religious meetings generally take place unimpeded despite delay or inaction at the local level, and no significant constraints on religious assembly were reported during the period covered by this report.

Monks can move internally without restriction.

*Religious Demography*

Buddhism is the state religion. The Government promotes national Buddhist holidays, provides Buddhist training and education to monks and others in pagodas, and modestly supports an institute that performs research and publishes materials on Khmer culture and Buddhist traditions.

Over 95 percent of the population are Theravada Buddhist. The Buddhist tradition is widespread and active in all provinces, with an estimated 3,700 pagodas throughout the country. Virtually all ethnic Cambodians are Buddhist, and there is a close association between Buddhism, Khmer cultural traditions, and daily life. Adherence to Buddhism generally is considered intrinsic to Cambodian ethnic and cultural identity.

Most of the remainder of the population is made up of ethnic Cham Muslims, who generally are located in Phnom Penh and in rural fishing villages in Kompong Cham, Kompong Chhnang, and Kampot provinces. There are four branches of Islam: The Malay-influenced Shafi branch, which constitutes 70 percent of the Cham Muslims; the Saudi-Kuwaiti influenced Wahabi branch (20 percent); the traditional Kom Iman-San branch (7 percent); and the Indonesian Kadiani branch (3 percent).

The country's small Christian community constitutes less than 1 percent of the population. Over 100 separate Christian organizations or denominations operate freely throughout the country and include over 700 congregations.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Foreign missionary groups generally operated freely throughout the country and have not encountered significant difficulties in performing their work. However, there reportedly are occasional local constraints on evangelization by Christians in public places—especially in areas of new Christian religious activity—but these generally are resolved satisfactorily by intervention with provincial or central government authorities.

Government officials expressed appreciation for the work of many foreign religious groups in providing much needed assistance in education, rural development, and training. Government officials also expressed some concern that foreign groups use the guise of religion to become involved in illegal or political affairs.

Government officials organize meetings for representatives of all religious groups to discuss religious developments and to address issues of concern. There are no constraints on the distribution of religious books or literature.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations generally are amicable between the various religious communities. The Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, and minority religions experience little or no societal discrimination in practice. Adherents of the minority Muslim or Christian faiths reported few societal problems on issues of religion. The Cham Muslims generally are well integrated into society, enjoy positions of prominence in business and in the Government, and face no reported persecution.

Occasional tensions have been reported among the various branches of Islam, which receive monetary support from groups in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, or Indonesia depending on the tenets of the particular branch. Some Buddhists also have expressed concern about the Cham Muslim community receiving financial assistance from foreign countries.

During the period covered by this report there were no reports of tension between Cambodian Christians and non-Christians. However, occasional tensions have been reported when Christian evangelists attempted to remove Buddhist images or religious items from private homes, but these disputes have not resulted in physical violence.

There are ecumenical and inter-faith organizations, which often are supported by funding from foreign public or private groups.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy representatives met with some religious leaders and are in contact with representatives of religious nongovernmental organizations and other groups representing the Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian faiths.

Embassy representatives have spoken with officials from the government Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs to discuss religious freedom.

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## CHINA

(Note: Tibet is discussed in a separate annex at the end of this report.)

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. There are five officially recognized religions—Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. For each faith there is a government-affiliated association to monitor and supervise its activities. Membership in many faiths is growing rapidly; however, while the Government generally does not seek to suppress this growth outright, it tries to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of groups or sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

During the beginning of the period covered by this report (the last 6 months of 1999), the Government's respect for religious freedom deteriorated markedly, especially for the Falun Gong and Tibetan Buddhists, and the Government's repression and abuses continued during the first 6 months of 2000. The atmosphere created by the harsh crackdown on the Falun Gong spiritual movement and the unremitting nationwide campaigns against "cults" and superstition, along with frequent exhortations by senior leaders to "strengthen religious work," had an inevitable spillover effect on other faiths. In October 1999, as part of the Government's anti-Falun Gong crackdown, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban "cults," including the Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. Several non-Falun Gong qigong groups and unregistered religious groups were banned under the decision. However, the Government's basic policy of permitting apolitical religious activities of registered religious groups to take place relatively unfettered in government-approved sites remained unchanged.

In general, unregistered religious groups, including Protestant and Catholic groups, continued to experience varying degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. Some unregistered religious groups were subjected to increased restrictions—including, in some cases, intimidation, harassment, and detention. However, the degree of restrictions varied significantly from region to region, and the number of religious adherents, in both registered and unregistered churches, continued to grow rapidly, and in some areas, with little official interference. In some regions, registered and unregistered churches were treated in a similar fashion by the authorities. In regions with high concentrations of Catholics, relations between the Government and the underground church loyal to the Vatican remained tense. However, citizens worshiping in officially sanctioned churches, mosques, and temples reported little or no day-to-day interference by the Government. The Government's efforts to maintain a strong degree of control over religion, and its crackdown on groups that it perceived to pose a threat, continued. Overall, however, in the two decades since the Cultural Revolution, when all forms of religion were banned, there has been a loosening of government controls and a resurgence in religious activity.

Despite the Government's decision to suspend the U.S.-China bilateral human rights dialog in May 1999, the Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing,

and U.S. Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made a concerted effort to encourage religious freedom. In Washington and in Beijing, in public and in private, U.S. officials repeatedly urged the Government to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protested and asked for further information about numerous individual cases of abuse, and urged China to resume a dialog with the Dalai Lama. The deterioration of religious freedom in China was a key factor in the U.S. decision to introduce once again a resolution critical of China's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups.

The Criminal Law states that government officials who deprive citizens of religious freedom may, in serious cases, be sentenced to up to 2 years in prison; however, there are no known cases of persons being punished under this statute.

The state arrogates to itself the right to recognize and thus to allow to operate particular religious groups and spiritual movements. The State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) is responsible for monitoring and judging the legitimacy of religious activity. The RAB and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) United Front Work Department (UFW), both of which are staffed by officials who are rarely if ever religious adherents, provide policy "guidance and supervision" over implementation of government regulations on religious activity, including the role of foreigners in religious activity.

During the period covered by this report, the Government continued, and in some areas, intensified a national campaign to enforce 1994 State Council regulations and subsequent provincial regulations that require all places of worship to register with government religious affairs bureaus and to come under the supervision of official "patriotic" religious organizations. During a September 1999 speech, President Jiang Zemin noted the Party's policy on freedom of religious belief but also called for stronger leadership over religious work and intensified management of religious affairs. He added that "we should energetically give guidance to religion so that it will keep in line with the Socialist society and serve ethnic unity, social stability, and modernization." The need for vigilance against allegedly hostile foreign forces bent on Westernizing or splitting the country, containment of religious "cults," the further adaptation of religion to socialist imperatives, strengthening the "rule of law" in managing religious affairs, enhanced political and ideological education for religious figures, and increased vigilance against growing religiosity in the Party and governing and military circles are identified as areas in need of work in the January 20, 2000 document, "Several Policy Issues Concerning Current Religion Work," which was issued in conjunction with a national meeting of the RAB. On March 11, 2000, the Party's flagship newspaper, the People's Daily, published a commentary on religious affairs work. The article urged all party members to "promote atheist thought in a positive way and persist in educating the masses of various ethnic groups with the Marxist perspective on religion." While the commentary also called on the Party to protect "citizens' freedom of religious belief," it warned that "hostile forces outside [China's] borders and separatist forces are taking advantage of ethnicity and religion to bring about political infiltration and the separation of the motherland."

The Government officially permits only those Christian churches affiliated with either the Catholic Patriotic Association/Catholic Bishops Conference or the (Protestant) Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council to operate legally. There are six requirements for the registration of venues for religious activity: possession of a meeting place; citizens who are religious believers and who regularly take part in religious activity; an organized governing board; a minimum number of followers; a set of operating rules; and a legal source of income. There are five officially recognized religions: Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism. Some groups registered voluntarily, some registered under pressure, while authorities refused to register others. Unofficial groups claimed that authorities often refuse them registration without explanation. The Government contends that these refusals were mainly the result of inadequate facilities and meeting spaces. Many religious groups have been reluctant to comply with the regulations out of



principled opposition to state control of religion or due to fear of adverse consequences if they reveal, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders. In some areas, efforts to register unauthorized groups are carried out by religious leaders and civil affairs officials. In other regions, registration is performed by police and RAB officials, concurrently with other law enforcement actions.

On October 31, 1999, as part of the Government's anti-Falun Gong crackdown, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban all "cults," including the Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate also provided "explanations" on applying existing criminal law to the Falun Gong. The law, as applied following these actions, specifies prison terms of 3 to 7 years for cult members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications. Under the law, cult leaders and recruiters can be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison. Several groups were declared "cults" and banned under the decision, including Christian, Buddhist, and various qigong groups. The Government banned Falun Gong in July 1999, but some Falun Gong leaders, who were arrested after the July ban, were tried and convicted under the anti-cult law in late 1999.

#### *Religious Demography*

According to an official government white paper, there are over 200 million religious adherents, representing a great variety of beliefs and practices. Official figures from late 1997 indicate that there are at least 3,000 religious organizations, 300,000 clergy, and 74 religious schools and colleges. There are also more than 85,000 approved venues for religious activities. Most religious adherents profess Eastern faiths, but tens of millions adhere to Christianity. According to estimates, 75 percent of the population practices some form of traditional folk religion (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors). Approximately 8 percent of the population are Buddhist, approximately 1.4 percent are Muslim, an estimated 0.4 percent belong to the official Catholic Church, an estimated 0.4 to 0.8 percent belong to the unofficial Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church, an estimated 0.08 percent to 1.2 percent are registered Protestants, and perhaps 2.4 to 6.5 percent worship in house churches that are independent of government control. There are no available estimates of the number of Taoists. However, according to a 1997 government publication, there are over 10,000 Taoist monks and nuns and over 1,000 Taoist temples.

The widespread traditional folk religion has revived in recent years and is tolerated to varying degrees as a loose affiliate of Taoism, or as an ethnic minority cultural practice; at the same time, however, folk religion has been labeled as "feudal superstition," and local authorities have destroyed thousands of local shrines.

Buddhists make up the largest body of organized religious believers. The Government estimates that there are more than 100 million Buddhists, most of whom are from the dominant Han ethnic group. However, it is difficult to estimate accurately the number of Buddhists because they do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies. The Government reports that there are 13,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries and more than 200,000 nuns and monks. In some areas, local governments enforced strictly regulations on places of worship, particularly on illegally constructed Buddhist temples and shrines.

According to government figures, there are 20 million Muslims, 35,000 Islamic places of worship, and more than 45,000 imams nationwide.

The unofficial, Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church claims a membership far larger than the 5 million persons registered with the official Catholic Church. Precise figures are difficult to determine, but Vatican officials have estimated that there are as many as 10 million adherents. According to official figures, the government-approved Catholic Church has 69 bishops, 5,000 clergy, and about 5,000 churches and meeting houses. There are 60,000 baptisms each year. The Government so far has refused to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and there is no Vatican representative in the country.

The Government maintains that there are between 10 and 15 million registered Protestants, 18,000 clergy, over 12,000 churches, and some 25,000 registered Protestant meeting places. According to foreign experts, perhaps 30 million persons worship in Protestant house churches that are independent of government control, although estimates by some house church groups range as high as 80 million.

Estimates of the number of Falun Gong practitioners vary widely; the Government claims that there may be as many as 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong (or Wheel of the Law), also known as Falun Dafa; followers of Falun Gong estimate that there are over 100 million adherents worldwide. Some experts estimate that the true number of adherents lies in the tens of millions. Falun Gong blends aspects of Taoism, Buddhism, and the meditation techniques and physical exercises of qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline) with the teachings of Falun Gong.

leader Li Hongzhi (a native of China who is currently living abroad). Despite the mystical nature of some of Li's teachings, Falun Gong does not consider itself a religion and has no clergy or places of worship.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government tends to perceive unregulated religious gatherings as a potential challenge to its authority, and during the period covered by this report it moved swiftly against houses of worship outside its control that grew too large or espoused beliefs that it considered threatening to "state security." Police closed "underground" mosques, temples, and seminaries, as well as large numbers of Catholic churches, and Protestant "house churches," many with significant memberships, properties, financial resources, and networks, and banned groups that it considered "cults." Some places of worship were destroyed. Leaders of unauthorized groups are often the targets of harassment, interrogations, detention, and physical abuse.

In the past, official tolerance for religions considered to be traditionally Chinese, such as Buddhism and Taoism, has been greater than that for Christianity, and these faiths often face fewer restrictions than the other recognized religions. As these non-Western faiths have grown rapidly in recent years, there are signs of greater government concern and new restrictions, especially on syncretic sects.

The Government continued, and in some places, intensified a national campaign to enforce 1994 State Council regulations and subsequent provincial regulations requiring all places of religious activity to register with government religious affairs bureaus and come under the supervision of official, "patriotic" religious organizations. There are reports that despite the rapidly growing religious population, it is difficult for new places of worship to be registered even among the five officially recognized faiths. The Government has restored or replaced churches, temples, mosques, and monasteries damaged or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and allowed the reopening of some seminaries. Implementation of this policy has varied from locality to locality. However, there are far fewer temples, churches, or mosques than existed 50 years ago (before the Cultural Revolution), despite the recent increase in number of religious believers. The difficulty in registering new places of worship has led to crowding in many existing places of worship.

Some bishops in the official Catholic Church are not recognized by the Holy See, although many have been recognized privately. In January 2000, bishops of the official Catholic Church, without consulting the Holy See, ordained 5 new official church bishops on the same day that the Pope consecrated 12 new Roman Catholic bishops in Rome. Some bishops of the official church reportedly refused to attend the Beijing ceremony, which they saw as a deliberate affront to the Vatican. However, the May 7, 2000 ordination service of Bishop Zhao Fengchang began with a statement that the Vatican had approved the ceremony. There are many long-standing vacancies in the official Catholic administration, particularly among bishops, and there are reports that the RAB and the official church patriotic association are pressuring the church to fill the vacancies quickly. However, some bishops who are ordained without Vatican recognition are not fully accepted by church members and other clerics, even in the official church. The Government's refusal to allow the official Catholic Church to recognize the religious authority of the Papacy has led many Catholics to refuse to join the official Catholic Church on the grounds that this refusal denies one of the fundamental tenets of their faith.

There are thriving Muslim communities in some areas, but government sensitivity to concerns of the Muslim community is limited. In November 1998 a Qing dynasty mosque was destroyed in Chengdu's Muslim quarter to make way for a boulevard near an expanded city square despite strong opposition from the city's Muslim population; the mosque had been the center of Muslim life in Chengdu. The construction of a new mosque over a complex of retail establishments further offended the community. As of June 2000, no construction upon the site of the Qing dynasty mosque had yet occurred; the imam, or leader, of the mosque that was demolished was ordered to leave Chengdu and has been forbidden to engage in religious work. The new officially sanctioned mosque over the retail complex has been attended only lightly since its opening.

The Government took some steps designed to show respect for the country's Muslims, such as offering congratulations on major Islamic holidays. When an official newspaper in Guangzhou published a picture of the kaaba in Mecca next to an unrelated photograph of a cloned pig in March 2000—outraging local Muslims, who cited the Muslim view of pigs as unclean—the authorities disciplined the editor, and the newspaper published an apology. The Government permits, and in some cases subsidizes, Muslim citizens who make the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. However, testimony before the congressionally mandated Commission on International Religious Freedom in March 2000, as well as other reports, stated that many Muslims of the

Uighur minority are not allowed to go on pilgrimage. According to credible reports, including written testimony to the Commission, on one occasion, hundreds of Uighurs with tickets and passports were denied permission to board an airplane to go on Hajj, as they were not part of the state quota. According to official government statistics, more than 45,000 Muslims have made the pilgrimage in recent years—5,000 in 1998. There have been nongovernmental reports that fewer persons participated in 1999 and 2000; according to some estimates less than 2,500 went in each of those years. According to some reports, the major limiting factors for participation in the Hajj were the cost, controls on passport issuance, and corruption of the officials responsible for overseeing pilgrims' travel for the Hajj.

In some areas where ethnic unrest has occurred, particularly among Central Asian Muslims (and especially the Uighurs) in Xinjiang, officials continue to restrict the building of mosques. However, in other areas, particularly in areas traditionally populated by the non-Central Asian Hui ethnic group, there is substantial religious building construction and renovation. After a series of violent incidents in Xinjiang beginning in 1997 and continuing into 2000, including reported bombings in Xinjiang and other parts of the country attributed to Uighur activists, police cracked down on Muslim religious activity and places of worship accused of supporting separatism, and local authorities issued regulations further restricting religious activities and teaching. Restrictions on Muslim religious practice in Xinjiang remain tight, and the authorities continue to restrict the religious education of youths under the age of 18.

Provincial-level Communist Party and government officials repeatedly called for stronger management of religious affairs and the separation of religion from administrative matters in Xinjiang. For example, the official Xinjiang Legal Daily reported that in recent years a township in Baicheng county had found cases of "religious interference" in judicial, marriage, and family planning matters. In response, the authorities began conducting monthly political study sessions for religious personnel. In addition, they required every mosque to record the number of attendees and names of those attending each day's activities. The official "Xinjiang Daily" reported that Yining County reviewed the activities of 420 mosques, and implemented a system of linking ethnic cadres to mosques in order to improve vigilance against "illegal religious activities." The article stated that the county's persistent ideological propaganda efforts had led a group of 24 women to shed their veils and "raise their level of civilization." The educational campaign reportedly also had led young ethnic couples who had married illegally by means of an Islamic betrothal ceremony to seek civil marriage certificates.

There were numerous reports in the official media of efforts by the authorities to confiscate "illegal religious publications" in Xinjiang. One report explained that such publications discussed "holy war" and "holy war history," promoted pan-Islamism, panTurkism, and ethnic separatism; and "fanned the flames of religious fanaticism." According to a July 2000 report of the International Coalition for Religious Freedom, since April 1996, only one publisher, the Xinjiang People's Publication House, has been allowed to print Muslim literature in Xinjiang.

The increase in the number of Christians has resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for Bibles. During 1999 the Government approved the printing of more than 3 million Bibles, and there currently are more than 22 million Bibles in print. One printing company that is a joint venture with an overseas Christian organization printed over 2.3 million Bibles during 1999, including Bibles in Braille and minority dialects, such as Korean, Jingbo, Lisu, Lahu, Niao, and Yao. Although Bibles can be purchased at some bookstores, they are not readily available and cannot be ordered directly from publishing houses by individuals. However, they are available for purchase at most officially recognized churches, and many house church members buy their Bibles from churches without incident. Nonetheless, some underground Christians hesitate to buy Bibles at official churches because such transactions sometimes involve receipts that identify the purchaser. Foreign experts confirm reports of chronic shortages of Bibles, mostly due to logistical problems in disseminating Bibles to rural areas, though the situation has improved in recent years due to improved distribution channels, including to house churches. Customs officials continue to monitor for the "smuggling" of Bibles and other religious materials into the country. There have been credible reports that the authorities sometimes confiscate Bibles in raids on house churches.

The authorities permit officially sanctioned religious organizations to maintain international contacts that do not entail "foreign control." What constitutes "control" is not defined. Foreigners are not permitted to conduct missionary activities, but foreign Christians currently are teaching English and other languages on college campuses with minimum interference from authorities as long as their proselytizing is low key. There were reports that in early 1999 the Government issued a circular

to tighten control over foreign missionary activity in the country. Regulations enacted in 1994 codified many existing rules involving foreigners, including a ban on proselytizing by foreigners, but for the most part allow foreign nationals to preach to foreigners, bring in religious materials for their own use, and preach to Chinese citizens at churches, mosques, and temples at the invitation of registered religious organizations.

In recent years, some local authorities, especially in northeastern China, have subjected worship services of alien residents to increased surveillance and restrictions. In other areas, authorities have displayed increasing tolerance of religious practice by foreigners. Weekly services of the foreign Jewish community in Beijing have been held uninterrupted since 1995 and High Holy Day observances have been allowed for more than 15 years. In September 1999, with the support of local authorities, the Shanghai Jewish community was allowed to hold a service in an historic Shanghai synagogue, which had been restored as a museum, for the first time since 1949. Local authorities indicated that the community could use the synagogue in the future for special occasions on a case-by-case basis. The community has used the synagogue three times, most recently for Passover services in April 2000. Upon the city's request, the Shanghai Rabbi and the community have submitted a list of additional holidays that they would want to celebrate.

Official religious organizations administer local Bible schools, 54 Catholic and Protestant seminaries, 9 institutes to train imams and Islamic scholars, and institutes to train Buddhist monks. Students who attend these institutes must demonstrate "political reliability" and all graduates must pass an examination on their theological and political knowledge to qualify for the clergy. Some young Uighur Muslims study outside of the country in Muslim religious schools. The Government has stated that there are 10 colleges conducting Islamic higher education and 2 other Islamic schools in Xinjiang operating with government support.

The Government permitted limited numbers of Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and Buddhist clergy to go abroad for additional religious studies. In most cases, funding for these training programs is provided by foreign organizations. Both official and unofficial Christian churches have problems training adequate numbers of clergy to meet the needs of their growing congregations. Due to the restrictions on religion between 1955 and 1985, no priests or other clergy in the official churches were ordained; most priests and pastors serving currently were trained either before 1955 or after 1985. Most religious institutions depend on their own resources. Frequently religious institutions run side businesses selling religious items, and at times they run strictly commercial businesses (restaurants are popular). Contributions from parish members are common among both the Catholics and Protestants. Sometimes the State will fund repairs for temples or shrines having cultural or historic significance. There are some reports that government funds are allocated only to registered churches, depending upon how independent they are perceived to be—those deemed too independent reportedly have their budgets cut. Due to government prohibitions, unofficial churches have particularly significant problems training clergy or sending students to study overseas, and many clergy receive only limited and inadequate preparation.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office; however, most influential positions in government are reserved for Party members, and Communist Party officials state that Party membership and religious belief are incompatible. Party membership also is required for almost all high level positions in government and in state-owned businesses and organizations. The Communist Party reportedly has issued two circulars since 1995 ordering Party members not to adhere to religious beliefs and ordering the expulsion of Party members who belong to religious organizations, whether open or clandestine. There were reports that the Government issued a circular in early 1999 to remind Party cadres that religion was incompatible with party membership, a theme reflected in authoritative media during the summer of 1999. For example, President and CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin said in a September 1999 speech that "party members of all ethnic groups must have a firm faith in socialism and communism, cannot believe in religion, cannot take part in or organize religious activities, and cannot take part in feudal superstitious activities." Muslims allegedly have been fired from government posts for praying during working hours. The "Routine Service Regulations" of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) state explicitly that servicemen "may not take part in religious or superstitious activities." Party and PLA military personnel were expelled for adhering to the Falun Gong spiritual movement, which the Government has banned as a "cult." However, according to government officials, many local Communist Party officials engage in some kind of religious activity; in certain localities, as many as 20 to 25 percent of Party officials engage in religious activities. Most officials who practice a religion are Buddhist or practice a folk religion. Religious

figures, who are not members of the CCP, are included in national and local government organizations, usually to represent their constituency on cultural and educational matters. The National People's Congress (NPC) includes several religious leaders, including Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, a Tibetan "living Buddha," who is a vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Religious groups also are represented in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a forum for "multiparty" cooperation and consultation led by the Chinese Communist Party, which advises the Government on policy.

The Government teaches atheism in schools. The participation of minors in religious education is prohibited by regulation. However, enforcement varies dramatically from region to region, and in some areas large numbers of young people attend religious services at both registered and unregistered places of worship.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

During the period covered in this report, unapproved religious and spiritual groups came under greater scrutiny—and, in some cases, harsh repression—even as officially sanctioned religious activity went largely unaffected. There were government actions that violated internationally recognized norms regarding freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech. Although there was no significant change in the central government's official policy toward religious freedom, the unrelenting campaign against Falun Gong and other "heretical cults," plus frequent exhortations by senior leaders to "strengthen religious work," had an inevitable spillover effect.

Between 1997 and 2000, there were reported bombings in Xinjiang and other parts of the country attributed to Uighur activists. The authorities responded with a harsh crackdown on Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region that failed to distinguish between those involved with illegal religious activities and those involved in ethnic separatism or terrorist activities. It is therefore difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments are aimed primarily at religious expression. The Yili Intermediate Court sentenced Turhan Saidalamoud, Nurahmet Niyazi, and Krubanjiang Yusseyin to death in September 1999 for "illegal religious proselytizing," murder, and manufacturing explosives, according to a foreign press report that cited official media. The same press report said that Alim Younous, Dulkan Rouz, and Turhong Awout were convicted and executed in Urumqi for murder, robbery, and the illegal manufacture, transportation, and storage of arms, ammunition, and explosives. Alim Yanous allegedly had set up a "party of Allah" in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, "with the aim of splitting national unity and setting up an Islamic power." According to a February 2000 report by Human Rights Watch, the pace of executions and imposition of long prison terms for suspected separatists in Xinjiang increased during 1999, and there were more frequent public sentencing rallies during the year. Human Rights Watch also reported tightening of control over the teaching materials, curriculums, and leadership of mosques and religious schools in 1999, and that six imams from Hotan City and Karakash County were detained toward the end of 1999 in part for non-compliance with religious regulations and for failing to teach government policy at religious meetings.

An official newspaper in Xinjiang reported in October 1999 that a cleric at a mosque in Karakash (Moyu) County in southern Xinjiang had mentioned the term "holy war" before crowds numbering more than 2,000. The cleric also reportedly had interfered with marriage and other administrative matters. The mosque allegedly became "a hotbed for illegal religious activities and separatism." The article ran under the headline "Take Care of Anyone Who Conducts Illegal Religious Activities," but did not state how the unnamed cleric described in the story had been "taken care of." Several employers in Lop County were fined in September 1999 for laxity in opposing illegal religious activities and for harboring wanted men, including those promoting "holy war."

There is a great deal of variation in how the authorities deal with unregistered religious groups. In certain regions, government supervision of religious activity is minimal, and registered and unregistered churches are treated similarly by authorities, existing openly side by side. In such areas, many congregants worship in both types of churches. In other regions, particularly where considerable unofficial and official religious activity takes place, local implementing regulations call for strict government oversight of religion, and authorities have cracked down on unregistered churches and their members. Implementing regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and Party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce vigorously government policy regarding unregistered churches. Since 1998, Guangzhou has had highly restrictive religious regulations. In 1999 Zhejiang province promulgated new religious affairs regulations that stipulated that "illegal"

property and income would be confiscated from those who “1) preside over or organize religious activities at places other than those for religious activities or at places not approved by a religious affairs department; 2) do missionary work outside the premises of a place of religious activity; and 3) sponsor religious training activities without obtaining the approval of a religious affairs department at or above the county level.” Regulations in Guangxi, Shanghai, and Chongqing also call for strict government oversight. In April 2000, the Fujian provincial government convened a meeting of religious affairs workers in order to exhort them to “ensure stability in religious circles and lead religious circles in making new and greater contributions to Socialist material and spiritual civilization.” At the meeting, a provincial leader also called on all religious affairs workers to “firmly establish a Marxist outlook on religion.”

In some areas, security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion of “fines,” interrogation, detention, and at times beatings and torture to harass unofficial religious figures and followers. Authorities particularly targeted unofficial religious groups in Beijing and the provinces of Henan and Shandong, where there are rapidly growing numbers of unregistered Protestants, and in Hebei, a center of unregistered Catholics.

However, many family churches, generally made up of family members and friends, and which conduct activities similar to those of home Bible study groups, are tolerated by the authorities as long as they remain small and unobtrusive. Family churches reportedly encounter difficulties when their memberships become too large, when they arrange for the use of facilities for the specific purpose of conducting religious activities, or when they forge links with other unregistered groups.

Some Protestant house church groups reported more frequent police raids of worship services and detentions than in previous years. In addition, according to press reports, in 1999 more than 20 unregistered Catholic churches were demolished, some with explosives, by the authorities in Changle and other localities in Fujian province. The churches were destroyed on the grounds that they had been built without the required permit or had been built with the wrong type of permit (such as with a permit for a building other than a church). Most of the churches reportedly were built by local congregations with the aid of remittances from relatives working abroad.

On the same day in October 1999 police disrupted services with nearly simultaneous raids on two of Guangzhou’s most prominent house churches—those of pastors Samuel Lamb and Li Dexian. Li and his wife, along with an Australian missionary, were detained for several hours, and Li’s church was ransacked by the police. Bibles were confiscated from his congregation and members of the congregation reportedly were threatened. Pastor Li was detained again in April 2000 for 15 days, during which time he was forced into a crouch for three days, unable to sleep or use toilet facilities, with his wrists and ankles manacled together. Li also has been detained on other occasions and reports that in some instances he was beaten. According to credible reports, on May 16, 2000, seven house churches were raided in Guangdong province. According to a press release of Christian Solidarity International, more than 10 house church leaders were arrested in the raids. Several house churches also were closed by the authorities.

The Jianghuai Morning Daily in Anhui province reported that on April 9, 2000, police detained 47 members of the unregistered Full Scope Church. According to the newspaper, six church leaders were to face criminal charges for organizing an “illegal sect,” while eight others likely would receive “administrative” (usually meaning reeducation-through-labor) sentences. The leader of the Full Scope Church, Xu Yongze, subsequently was released from prison in late May 2000, 2 months after he should have been released upon the expiration of his 3-year sentence. Although he was released from a labor camp, it is unclear whether Xu remains subject to some restrictions.

In some regions, coexistence and cooperation between official and unofficial churches, both Catholic and Protestant, is close enough to blur the line between the two. However, in some areas relations between the two churches remain hostile. In Hebei, where perhaps half of the country’s Catholics reside, friction between unofficial Catholics and local authorities continued. Hebei authorities have been known to force many underground priests and believers to make a choice of either joining the “patriotic” church or facing punishment such as fines, job loss, periodic detentions, and, in some cases, having their children barred from school. Some were forced into hiding. In September 1999, police, allegedly at the instigation of the local official Catholic Church in Wenzhou, instructed 12 underground Catholic church leaders—including Bishop Lin Xili, Chen Nailiang, and Wang Zhongfa—to go to a hotel, where they were pressured to join the official Catholic church. There were reports in May 2000 that local authorities in Zhejiang province had closed down seven

Catholic churches because they failed to join the official Catholic Church. In May 2000, Father Jiang Shurang, an underground priest in Zhejiang province, was sentenced to 6 years in prison for illegally printing Bibles and other religious material. There also are reports of divisions within both the official Protestant church and the house church movement over issues of doctrine; in both the registered and unregistered Protestant churches, there are groups with conservative views and groups with more unorthodox views. In some areas there are reports of harassment of churches by local religious affairs bureau officials which is attributed, at least in part, to financial issues. For example, although regulations require local authorities to provide land to church groups, some local officials may try to avoid doing so by denying registration. Official churches may also face harassment if local authorities wish to acquire the land on which a church is located. In addition to refusing to register churches, there are also reports that religious affairs bureau officials have requested illegal "donations" from churches in their jurisdictions as a means of raising extra revenue.

The Party's Central Committee issued a document on August 16, 1999, calling on the authorities to tighten control of the official Catholic Church and to eliminate the underground Catholic Church if it does not bend to Government control. The Commission on International Religious Freedom also reported that in recent months, there has been increasing pressure by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association on underground Catholic bishops to join the official church, and that the authorities have reorganized dioceses without consulting church leaders. The Government in 1993 shortened the required number of years of seminary training for priests.

The Hong Kong press reported that the Guangdong provincial government had issued a circular ordering authorities to increase the monitoring of Christian and Muslim activities.

On March 25, 2000, police raided a house church service in Jilin and confiscated the Bible and camera of a foreigner who was in attendance. The foreign Christian subsequently was fined, and one local official described the house church service as a "heretical religious activity."

Tibetan Buddhists outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) appear to face significant restrictions and are subject to patriotic education campaigns. On October 24, 1999, three Tibetan Buddhist monks, Sonam Phuntsok, Agya Tsering, and Sonam, were arrested at Dargye monastery in western Sichuan province. The three reportedly were suspected of being in contact with exile groups, and of supporting the Dalai Lama. These arrests reportedly were linked by the Government to the bombing of a medical clinic on October 7. Their detention sparked a large local protest later in the month, during which police reportedly fired into the crowd and injured demonstrators. (A discussion of government restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism in the TAR can be found in the Tibet annex to this report.)

The Government has waged a severe political, propaganda, and police campaign against the Falun Gong spiritual movement during the period covered by this report. On July 22, 1999, three months after 10,000 Falun Gong adherents had demonstrated peacefully in front of the Zhongnanhai leadership compound in Beijing, the Government officially declared Falun Gong illegal and began a nationwide crackdown. Around the country, tens of thousands of practitioners were rounded up and detained for several days—often in open stadiums—under poor and overcrowded conditions, with inadequate food, water, and sanitary facilities. Practitioners who refused to renounce their beliefs were expelled from schools or fired from jobs. Some detainees were government officials and Communist Party members. A few high-ranking practitioners were forced to disavow their ties to Falun Gong on national television. Government officials who are practitioners were required to undergo anti-Falun Gong study sessions, and were prohibited from Falun Gong activities; some were expelled from the Party for refusing to recant their beliefs. There were reports that local government leaders and heads of institutions in the northeast were summoned to Beijing or fired if too many persons under their jurisdictions participated in Falun Gong demonstrations. There were also reports that Public Security Bureau forbade the renting of apartments to Falun Gong practitioners. On July 29, 1999 the Government issued a warrant for the arrest of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi, who was charged with holding demonstrations without appropriate permits and disturbing public order. The Government requested INTERPOL's assistance in apprehending Li, who resides abroad, but INTERPOL declined to assist, on the grounds that the offense was not a crime recognized under the INTERPOL charter, and that the request was political in nature. Late in the year, President Jiang Zemin announced that the campaign against the Falun Gong was one of the "three major political struggles" of 1999.

In July 1999, the Government also launched a massive anti-Falun Gong propaganda campaign that for weeks dominated the nightly news with details of Falun

Gong's alleged crimes and the effectiveness of the Government's effort to crush the group. Special programs revealing the Falun Gong's alleged "evil nature" featured testimonials by self-proclaimed former practitioners recounting how they had been duped by the "cult." The media campaign continued through the end of 1999, with articles appearing regularly though with far less frequency than at the campaign's height. The Government also seized and destroyed Falun Gong literature, including over 1 million books, in well publicized sweeps of homes and bookstores. Police in Dandong City, Liaoning province, reported that they had arrested six workers and a factory boss for printing outlawed Falun Gong material. According to a November 1999 official press report, the Qinghai People's Publishing House was suspended by the State Press and Publication Administration for printing four Falun Gong books in January 1999, and those responsible reportedly were punished.

Authorities attempted to shut down Falun Gong Internet websites. According to a press report, an attack on a foreign-based website was traced to government security departments. A Hong Kong based human rights group reported that a Falun Gong website designed and operated in Jilin by computer engineer Zhang Haitao was shut down on July 24, 1999, and that Zhang was arrested July 29, 1999. According to Amnesty International, Zhang Ji, a computer science student, was arrested in Heilongjiang and charged with using the Internet to spread "subversive information" after sending e-mails to Canada and the United States about mistreatment of Falun Gong practitioners. There have been reports that Falun Gong practitioners living in other countries have received virus-infested e-mail messages.

On October 28, 1999, several Falun Gong practitioners held a clandestine press conference for foreign reporters in which they described an increase in harassment and in physical abuse by the police. Many of the practitioners involved later reportedly were arrested; the authorities questioned some of the foreign journalists who attended the press conference and temporarily confiscated their press credentials and residence permits. Several foreign reporters also were detained briefly on April 25, 2000, after having taken photographs of police detaining Falun Gong demonstrators on Tiananmen Square. Foreign tourists routinely had their film and videotape confiscated after recording (often inadvertently) some of the detentions.

Practitioners defied government efforts to prevent them from entering Beijing. Protests (by individuals or small groups of practitioners) at Tiananmen Square occurred almost daily during the period covered by this report. Demonstrations also continued around the country. Police quickly broke up demonstrations, at times kicking and beating protestors, and detained them. In September 1999, a non-governmental organization (NGO) reported that at least 300 adherents were arrested in 9 cities in 1 week. In late October, the pace of detentions picked up as practitioners converged on Beijing and began a series of peaceful, low-key protests of a pending decision by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to ban all cults. Most protests were small and short-lived as expanded police units quickly detained anyone who admitted to being or appeared to be a practitioner. In late October, a Party official stated that 3,000 persons from around the country were detained in police sweeps of Beijing for nonresidents. On November 16, 1999, during a visit by the UN Secretary General, more than 12 practitioners who unfurled a Falun Gong banner were detained forcibly at Tiananmen Square. On November 30, 1999, Vice Premier Li Lanqing stated that authorities detained over 35,000 practitioners between July 22 and October 30 1999 (the Government later clarified Li's statement, noting that the figure represented the total number of confrontations of police with adherents and that many persons had multiple encounters with police). Hundreds of practitioners reportedly were arrested at Tiananmen Square in February 2000 during lunar New Year protests, forcing a brief closure of the Square. Large numbers were arrested while protesting on March 5 (opening of the National People's Congress), April 25 (the anniversary of the 1999 Zhongnanhai demonstration), and May 11 (reportedly Falun Gong founder Li Hongzhi's birthday). Authorities also briefly detained foreign practitioners (it remains unclear whether the authorities were aware that such persons were foreigners). On November 24, 1999, four foreign practitioners were detained in Guangzhou; the foreigners were released a few days later and expelled from the country, while Chinese citizens detained with them remained in custody. On December 15, three Chinese nationals with foreign residency were detained in Shenzhen for visiting other Falun Gong practitioners; they were given 15 days of administrative detention. In February 2000, a U.S. citizen practitioner was detained for 3 days.

During the period covered by this report, there were numerous credible reports of police involvement in beatings, detention under extremely harsh conditions, torture (including by electric shock and by having hands and feet shackled and linked with crossed steel chains), and other abuses of detained Falun Gong practitioners. Police often used excessive force when detaining peaceful protesters, some of them



elderly or accompanied by small children. There are credible reports that estimate at least 24 practitioners have died while in police custody since July 1999. Zhao Jinhua, of Shandong province, reportedly was detained on September 27, 1999, while meditating. Over the next 10 days, police reportedly tortured Zhao using rubber batons and electric shocks. On October 7, she died reportedly due to injuries suffered while in detention. The official media reported that Zhao had died of a heart attack. Similarly, Gao Xianmin died in police custody on January 17, 2000. Gao was detained with a group of fellow practitioners in Guangzhou on December 31, 1999. Credible reports indicate that Gao was tortured while in custody, including by having high-density salt water forced into his stomach. Police gave no explanation for his death. On February 17, 2000, 60-year-old Chen Zixiu was detained in Weihai as she attempted to travel to Beijing to join peaceful protests. Over the next few days, her family received word from another detainee that Chen was being beaten. On February 21, local police informed the family that Chen had died. Family members report that her body was covered with bruises and her teeth and nose were broken. According to press reports, Zhou Zhichang, a practitioner imprisoned in Heilongjiang Province since September 1999, died in custody in May 2000, after an 8-day hunger strike. On October 27, 1999, police in Heilongjiang province stated that Chen Ying, an 18-year-old practitioner of Falun Gong who died while in police custody in August, had jumped to her death from a moving train. Zhao Dong also allegedly jumped from a train while in police custody; he reportedly died in late September 1999.

Although the vast majority of practitioners detained were later released, those identified by the Government as "core leaders" were singled out for particularly harsh treatment. On October 25, 1999, the official media reported that at least 13 Falun Gong leaders had been charged with stealing and leaking state secrets. On October 31, 1999, as part of the Government's anti-Falun Gong crackdown, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban "cults," including Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. Under the decision, cult members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications can receive prison terms of 3 to 7 years. Cult leaders and recruiters can be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison. On November 3, days after action by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to ban all cults under the Criminal Law, authorities used this law to charge 6 Falun Gong leaders, some of whom, it is believed, were arrested in July 1999. On November 8, the Government confirmed that 111 practitioners had been charged with serious crimes including disturbing social order and stealing state secrets. On December 26, a Beijing court sentenced four adherents for using a cult "to obstruct justice, causing human deaths in the process of organizing a cult, and illegally obtaining state secrets." Li Chang, a former Public Security Ministry official, was given 18 years in prison; former Railways Ministry official Wang Zhiwen was sentenced to 16 years. Two other prominent adherents, Ji Liewu and Yao Jie, received 12 years and 7 years, respectively. According to an international human rights organization, the Ministry of Justice required attorneys to obtain government permission to represent Falun Gong adherents. Amnesty International reports that some lawyers have been prevented from entering pleas of "not guilty" for practitioners. Human rights organizations estimate that as many as 300 people have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 18 years for involvement with Falun Gong.

Many other practitioners were sentenced administratively, without trial, to up to 3 years in reeducation-through-labor camps. According to credible estimates, as many as 5,000 may have received such sentences. According to credible reports, authorities also have started confining some practitioners to psychiatric hospitals. Amnesty International reported that, on January 20, 2000, a Changguang Police Station spokesman confirmed that about 50 "extremist" Falun Gong practitioners had been placed in a psychiatric hospital near Beijing, and cited reports from Falun Gong practitioners that the practitioner's families were asked for fees to cover living expenses in the hospital. Amnesty International also reports that practitioners were taken to psychiatric hospitals in Jiaozhou, Shandong, Province, in September 1999, and in Xinxiang, Henan, in December 1999.

Religious groups that preach beliefs outside the bounds of officially approved doctrine (such as the imminent coming of the Apocalypse, or holy war) or that have charismatic leaders often are singled out for particularly severe harassment. Some observers have attributed the unorthodox beliefs of some of these groups to under-trained clergy. Others acknowledge that some individuals may be exploiting the re-emergence of interest in religion for personal gain. Police continued their efforts to close down an underground evangelical group called the "Shouters," an offshoot of a pre-1949 indigenous Protestant group. The Government also initiated a general crackdown on other groups it considered "cults." In September 1999, 31 members

of the “Cold Water Religion” reportedly were arrested in Lianping County, Guangdong; 3 of the group’s churches reportedly were destroyed. Liu Jiaguo, leader of the Supreme Deity sect, was executed in October 1999. He was convicted on charges of raping 11 women and of defrauding cult members.

The crackdown on “cults” intensified later in the year, with press reports stating that restrictions would be tightened on several “cults” and various Christian groups. The Zhong Gong qigong group, which reportedly had a following rivaling that of Falun Gong, was banned under the anti-cult application of the Criminal Law, and its leader, Zhang Hongbao, was charged with rape, forgery, and illegal crossing of boundaries. Zhong Gong, like other qigong groups, teaches that the body’s vital forces, or qi, can be harnessed for healing purposes and spiritual growth through meditation and spiritual exercises. According to a news report, a local Zhong Gong leader in Zhejiang Province, Chen Jilong, was convicted in January 2000 of illegally practicing medicine and was sentenced to 2 years in prison. Two leaders of other qigong groups also reportedly were arrested, and the Government banned the practice of qigong exercises on public or government property. This has created an atmosphere of uncertainty for many, of not most, qigong practitioners, and there are reports that some qigong practitioners now fear practicing or teaching openly. There were reports that 14 unofficial Christian groups and a Buddhist organization were branded by the Government as “evil sects,” as well.

There were many religious detainees and prisoners in addition to the thousands of Falun Gong practitioners detained during the period covered by this report. In some cases, public security officials have used prison or reeducation-through-labor sentences to enforce religious affairs regulations. Qin Baocai and Mu Sheng, colleagues of Protestant house church leader Xu Yongze, continue to serve reeducation-through-labor sentences. The Government’s 1997 White Paper on Religious Freedom stated that Xu had violated the law by promoting a cult, preaching that the Apocalypse was near, and asking worshipers to wait in public spaces for several consecutive days. Group members deny these charges. On August 18, 1999, eight house church leaders—Zhao Dexin, Yang Xian, Miao Hailin, Chen Zide, Li Wen, Han Shaorong, and two others—reportedly were arrested in Henan. On August 24, 1999, 40 house church members reportedly were arrested in Fengcheng, Henan. Among those detained were David Zhang (Rongliang) and Zheng Shuqian of the Fengcheng church group; both church leaders were sentenced to reeducation-through-labor. According to a Hong Kong human rights organization, on March 2, 2000, 15 members of the China Evangelistic Fellowship were arrested while holding a service in Nanwang City, Henan province. Two of the group’s leaders, Jiang Qinggang and Hao Huaiping, reportedly faced reeducation-through-labor sentences. The director of the Government’s Religious Affairs Bureau had labeled the fellowship publicly as a “cult” at the end of 1999. In December 1999, Shen Yiping and three other Fellowship leaders were sentenced to reeducation-through-labor for being “cult leaders.”

The whereabouts of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, whose followers reported that he was arrested in 1997, remained unclear. Underground Catholic sources in Hebei claimed that he still was under detention, while the Government denied having taken “any coercive measures” against him. Reliable sources reported that Bishop An Shuxin, Bishop Zhang Weizhu, Father Cui Xing, and Father Wang Qianjun remained under detention in Hebei; Bishop Liu reportedly remained under house arrest in Zhejiang province. According to a Freedom House report, in the last half of 1999, four Catholic Bishops reportedly were detained or arrested for refusing to join the official church or for conducting unauthorized services. The four were Bishop Jia Zhiguo (of Hebei province, on August 15); Bishop Xie Shiguang (of Fujian province, in mid-October); Bishop Lin Xili (of Zhejiang province, on October 28); and Bishop Han Dingxiang (of Hebei province, around December 1). All of the bishops reportedly were arrested for refusing to join the official church or for conducting unauthorized services. In January 2000, Father Hu Duo reportedly was detained in Hebei; according to a Human Rights Watch report, authorities that month also reportedly detained, beat, and fined an unknown number of underground Catholics in Baoding, Hebei. In Fuzhou, Fujian province, a large group of police arrested 80-year-old underground Catholic Bishop Yang Shudao on February 10, 2000. The Government denied that the elderly Bishop is being detained, claiming that he is receiving medical treatment. Underground Catholic Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang of Shanghai remained under surveillance and often had his movements restricted. Roman Catholic Bishop Zeng Jingmu, who was released from a labor camp in 1998, reportedly remains under house arrest.

During the beginning of the period covered by this report (the last 6 months of 1999), the Government’s respect for religious freedom deteriorated markedly, especially for the Falun Gong and Tibetan Buddhists, and the Government’s repression and abuses continued during the first 6 months of 2000. There were no indications

of a relaxation of the Government's restrictions on religious freedom, or of its crack-down on Falun Gong, as of mid-2000.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The communities of the five official religions—Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism—coexist without significant friction. However, in some parts of the country, there is a tense relationship between registered and unregistered Christian churches. In other areas, the two groups coexist without problems. In general the majority of the population shows little interest in the affairs of the religious minority beyond visiting temples during festivals or churches on Christmas Eve. Religious/ethnic minority groups such as Tibetans and Uighurs experience societal discrimination, but this is not based solely on their religious beliefs. Traditionally, there also has been tension between the Han and the Hui, a Muslim ethnic group.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Department of State, U.S. officials in Beijing, and the Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in the country, using both focused external pressure on abuses and support for positive trends within the country. In exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central and local authorities to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protest vigorously whenever there are credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination, in violation of international laws and standards, and request information in cases of alleged persecution where the facts are incomplete or contradictory. At the same time, U.S. officials make the case to the country's leaders that freedom of religion can strengthen, not harm, the country. The U.S. Embassy and consulates also collect information about abuses and maintain contacts in China's religious communities with a wide spectrum of religious leaders including bishops, priests, ministers of the official Christian churches, and Taoist and Buddhist leaders. U.S. officials also meet with leaders and members of the unofficial Christian churches. The Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in China, human rights organizations, and religious groups in the United States. The Department of State is sending increasing numbers of Chinese religious leaders and scholars to the U.S. on international visitor programs to see first hand the role that religion plays in the United States. The Embassy also brings experts on religion from the United States to China to speak about the role of religion in American life and public policy.

In May 1999, the Chinese government suspended the official U.S.China bilateral human rights dialog. The suspension, which remains in effect, has limited the U.S. Government's ability to express concerns about religious freedom to Chinese officials. At times, government officials have refused to grant meetings to U.S. embassy officials who intended to raise religious freedom or other human rights issues. Despite these limitations, U.S. officials in Washington and Beijing have continued to protest individual incidents of abuse. For example, Embassy officials have continued to seek clarification about the status of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin. On numerous occasions, both the Department of State and the Embassy in Beijing protested government actions taken against Falun Gong followers, including the temporary detention of thousands of adherents in July 1999 and the sentencing of four group leaders later in the year. In May 2000, senior embassy officials urged the Chinese to release Pastor Xu Yongze, whose reeducation-through-labor sentence expired in March 2000. Consulate Guangzhou officials also protested to local officials the detention and harassment of Pastor Li Dexian. State Department officials called in senior Chinese embassy officials in Washington to protest the January detention of Roman Catholic Bishop Yang Shudao.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

## TIBET

*(This section of the report on China has been prepared pursuant to Section 536 (b) of Public Law 103-236. The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)—hereinafter referred to as “Tibet”—to be part of the People’s Republic of China. Preservation and development of Tibet’s unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and protection of its people’s fundamental human rights continue to be of concern.)*

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief; however, the Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence, including displaying the Dalai Lama’s picture, or any form of separatism (which is described as “splittist”), are not tolerated and are promptly and forcibly suppressed.

The Chinese Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations; however, repression of religious freedom continued, and the Government’s record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the period covered by this report.

The Government continued its “patriotic education” campaign aimed at enforcing compliance with government regulations and either cowing or weeding out monks and nuns who refuse to adopt the Party line and remain sympathetic to the Dalai Lama (the leading religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism). The “patriotic education” campaign also is intended to increase the Government’s control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. The “patriotic reeducation” of monks and nuns, which began in 1996 in Lhasa area monasteries and in subsequent years was intensified and extended throughout Tibet and to monasteries outside of the TAR, continued but at a lower level of intensity. A new round of political education classes in monasteries began at the end of 1999 in Lhasa and in some smaller monasteries in more remote parts of the TAR. However, the current pattern of classes several times per week or per month seems less frequent than previously. Many persons, including monks and nuns, were arrested by authorities while attempting to protest peacefully or for refusing to abide by rules applied by government authorities in Buddhist monasteries, including the renunciation of the Dalai Lama and the acceptance of the unity of China and Tibet. Many others remain in detention, some serving long prison terms, for similar offenses. There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism, and the death of prisoners; at least two major monasteries were closed for part of the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government continues to make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet, by urging central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibet, by protesting credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination, by discussing cases with the authorities, and by requesting information about specific incidents.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. The Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence, including displaying the Dalai Lama’s picture, or any form of separatism (which is described as “splittist”), are not tolerated and are promptly and forcibly suppressed.

The Government continued its harsh rhetorical campaign against the Dalai Lama, the most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism, and his leadership of a “government-in-exile”. The official press continued to criticize vehemently the “Dalai clique” and, in an attempt to undermine the credibility of his religious authority, repeatedly described the Dalai Lama as a “criminal” who was determined to split China. Both central government and local officials often insist that dialog with the Dalai Lama is essentially impossible and claim that his actions belie his repeated public assurances that he does not advocate independence for Tibet. Nonetheless, the Govern-

ment asserts that the door to dialog and negotiation is open as long as the Dalai Lama publicly affirms that Tibet is an inseparable part of China and that Taiwan is a province of China.

The Government claims that since the end of the Cultural Revolution, it has contributed sums in excess of \$40 million (300 to 400 million rmb) toward the restoration of tens of thousands of Buddhist sites, which were destroyed before and during that period. The Government funding of restoration efforts ostensibly was done to support the practice of religion, but also was done in part to promote the development of tourism in Tibet. Most recent restoration efforts are funded privately; Samye monastery near Lhasa airport is the only large site currently known to be enjoying government-funded restoration efforts.

#### *Religious Demography*

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism to some degree. Many ethnic Tibetan government officials and Communist Party members practice Buddhism. Chinese officials state that Tibet has more than 46,300 Buddhist monks and nuns and approximately 1,787 monasteries, temples, and religious sites. Officials have used these same figures for several years, though there are credible reports that the numbers of monks and nuns have dropped at many sites, especially since the beginning of the "patriotic education" campaign, which has resulted in the expulsion from monasteries and nunneries of many monks and nuns who refused to denounce the Dalai Lama or who were found to be "politically unqualified" to be monks or nuns. The numbers represent only the Tibet Autonomous Region; thousands of monks and nuns live in other Tibetan areas of China, including parts of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai Provinces.

While officials state that there is no Falun Gong activity in the TAR, reports indicate that there are small numbers of practitioners of Falun Gong present in the region, among the ethnic Han population. There were reports that a few practitioners of Falun Gong have been detained in Tibet since Falun Gong was banned in July 1999.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Buddhist monasteries and proindependence activism are closely associated in Tibet, and the Government has moved to curb the proliferation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which it charges are a drain on local resources and a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. The Government states there are no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries and that each monastery's democratic management committee decides on its own how many monks the monastery can support. However, these committees are government-controlled; and in practice, the Government generally imposes strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries. The Government has the right to disapprove any individual's application to take up religious orders; however, these restrictions are not always enforced.

Monasteries continue to house and train young monks. Although by regulation monks are prohibited from joining a monastery prior to the age of 18, many younger boys in fact continue the tradition of entering monastic life. However, many young novices, who traditionally served as attendants to older monks while receiving a basic monastic education and awaiting formal ordination, have been expelled from monasteries in recent years for being underage; the fact that these novices were not regular members of the monasteries has allowed authorities to deny that there has been a significant decline in the numbers of monks.

The Government continued to oversee the daily operations of major monasteries. The Government, which does not contribute to monasteries' operational funds, retains management control of the monasteries through the government-controlled democratic management committees and the local religious affairs bureaus. During 1999 the Tibet Autonomous Region Religious Affairs Bureau confirmed that all RAB officers are members of the Communist Party, and that Party members are required to be atheists; however, it is not possible to confirm that members of the local RAB's are atheists. Regulations restrict leadership of management committees of monasteries to "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns and specify that the Government must approve all members of the committees. At some major monasteries, government officials also sit on the committees. Despite these government efforts to control the Buddhist clergy and monasteries, antigovernment sentiment remains strong.

In January 2000, officials closed the Tsurphu monastery (the home of the Karmapa, the highest ranking lama of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kargyu school) to visitors after the Karmapa's flight to India. Many other persons, including lay persons, were questioned in connection with the Karmapa's escape. There were reports that several high ranking TAR officials were called to Beijing after the escape

to account for their actions. According to the Tibet Information Network (TIN), authorities replaced monks on the monastic management committee at Tsurphu after the Karmapa's escape, while other monks were admonished to improve their "political attitudes" or face further "patriotic education" sessions. Officials and monks at the monastery reportedly were under investigation by the authorities. The dramatic departure of the Karmapa added to tensions and increased the authorities' efforts to control monastic activity in the TAR. Consequently, it has also made the authorities pay more attention to illegal border crossings. There were reports that in May 2000, as many as 50 Tibetan students returning to Tibet from India were arrested at the Nepal-China border. The TIN reported that the Reting Monastery near Lhasa was closed to visitors in May 2000 after the arrest of eight monks for protesting the authorities' selection of 2-year-old Sonam Phuntsog in January 2000 as the seventh reincarnation of the Reting Rinpoche. The TIN also reported that the Taglung Drag monastery in Lhasa municipality was threatened with closure and its monks with expulsion if they refused to denounce the Dalai Lama after monks from the monastery shouted pro-independence slogans in two separate incidents in March and August 1999. According to TIN, "patriotic education" activities were increased, and 16 of 24 monks reportedly left the monastery in September 1999 rather than denounce the Dalai Lama.

Agva Rinpoche, former Abbott of Kumbum monastery, and a senior Tibetan religious leader and official at the Deputy Minister level, left the country in November 1998. In a hearing held in March 2000 organized by the Commission on International Religious Freedom, he stated that his reasons for leaving Tibet were that he was forced to denounce the Dalai Lama and his religion and that the Government demanded a heightened role for him in legitimizing Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy recognized by the Government as the Panchen Lama.

The Government continued its "patriotic education" campaign aimed at enforcing compliance with government regulations and either cowing or weeding out monks and nuns who refuse to adopt the Party line and remain sympathetic to the Dalai Lama (the leading religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism). The "patriotic education" campaign also is intended to increase the Government's control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. The campaigns, which have been largely unsuccessful in changing Tibetans' attitudes, are aimed at controlling the monasteries and expelling supporters of the Dalai Lama. The campaigns require monks to be "patriotic" and sign a declaration agreeing to reject independence for Tibet; reject Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama; reject and denounce the Dalai Lama; recognize the unity of China and Tibet; and not listen to the Voice of America. According to some reports, monks who refused to sign were expelled from their monasteries and were not permitted to return home to work. Others were forced to leave their monasteries after failing to pass exams associated with the campaigns, and still others left "voluntarily" rather than denounce the Dalai Lama. Government "work teams" remain in some monasteries and conduct classes that monks are required to attend on a regular basis. Topics include relations between Tibetans and Han Chinese, Tibet's historical status as a part of China, and the role of the Dalai Lama in attempting to "split" the country. Portraits of Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy selected by the Government to be the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, were on prominent display in some monasteries, as were sets of rules governing religious activity. The Government still banned pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama. There has been intense resistance to the campaigns. Both monks and lay Buddhists deeply resented the Government's efforts. The campaign has disrupted religious activities severely in many monasteries and prompted monks and nuns to flee to India. Approximately 3,000 Tibetans enter Nepal each year to escape conditions in Tibet, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees; onethird of these refugees claim that they left because of the "patriotic reeducation" campaigns.

The Government approved the selection of 2-year-old Sonam Phuntsog on January 16, 2000 as the seventh reincarnation of the Reting Rinpoche. A Tibetan government official stated that officials supervising religion should ensure that the boy "loves the Communist Party of China, the Socialist country, and Tibetan Buddhism" and that he would help to "preserve the unity of the Chinese nation." The Dalai Lama, who normally must approve the selection of important religious figures such as the Reting Rinpoche, did not recognize this choice; many of the monks at Reting monastery reportedly did not accept the child as the Reting Rinpoche.

The Government continued to insist that the boy it selected in 1995 is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. The authorities tightly control all aspects of his life, and he has appeared publicly in Beijing only on rare occasions. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second most prominent figure, after the Dalai Lama.

His public appearances were marked by a heavy security presence. At all other times, the authorities strictly limit access to the boy.

The ban on the public display of photographs of the Dalai Lama continued, and such pictures were not readily available except through illegal means. Some monasteries and many individuals displayed them privately, but in the spring of 2000 Lhasa area neighborhood committees began sending teams to the homes of ordinary citizens to confiscate books about and pictures of the Dalai Lama. This restriction is in effect in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. Although a few shops still quietly sell his photograph, outside the TAR the vast majority of monasteries no longer display his photo.

Some 1,000 religious figures hold positions in local people's congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. However, the Government continues to insist that Communist Party members and government employees adhere to the Party's code of atheism. During the period covered by this report, in Lhasa and other areas the authorities increased restrictions on religious activities, prohibiting government and Communist Party officials from going into monasteries, visiting the Jokhang temple, having altars in their homes, participating in religious activities during the Tibetan New Year, or placing new prayer flags on their roofs (a traditional practice during the Tibetan New Year). There were also reports during the spring of 2000 that some government employees were forbidden to make donations to monks and nuns in Lhasa. In some areas, private citizens also were prohibited from engaging in traditional New Year's activities such as placing prayer flags on the top of Bumpari, a mountain near Lhasa, burning incense, and making the traditional "lingkor" (pilgrimage circuit around the sacred sites of Lhasa) during the festival of Sagadawa in June 2000. Government employees reportedly were threatened with dismissal if they made the "lingkor." According to credible reports, there were instances in which the authorities threatened to terminate the employment of Tibetan government employees who sent their children to receive a religious education in India, and in which authorities searched the homes of government workers for religious objects or pictures of the Dalai Lama.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Tibetan Buddhism came under additional attack during the period covered by this report. In August 1999, according to an Amnesty International report, two monks from the Taglung Drag monastery were detained as part of a protest involving monks and nuns after shouting proindependence slogans during a cultural performance held in conjunction with the National Minority Games. In late December 1999, 14-year-old Ugyen Trinley Dorje, recognized by both the Government and the Dalai Lama as the Karmapa, left Tibet secretly and fled to India, reportedly to seek religious education. He stated that he left because of controls on his movements and the refusal either to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentor or to allow his mentor to come to him. The Karmapa, who is the third most well respected and influential religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism, arrived in India in early January, 2000. Shortly after his departure, the seat of the Karmapa, the Tsurphu monastery, was raided. Authorities arrested at least two persons from the monastery. There was also a Tibet Information Network report that the Karmapa's parents were placed under surveillance. Government officials denied that there were any arrests at the Tsurphu monastery or that the Karmapa's parents have faced restrictions of any kind.

There were numerous arrests of monks charged with distributing or possessing pictures of the Dalai Lama or with having links to exile groups; some of these reports came from areas outside of the TAR. In a Tibetan area of Sichuan province, at least five monks were arrested over the summer and fall of 1999 for engaging in such activities. According to TIN, in July 1999, new restrictions were imposed by the authorities to prevent celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday. Reports indicate that Tibetans were forbidden to hold traditional incense-burning ceremonies anywhere in Lhasa, and that all places of worship were closed. Authorities also detained three monks on October 1, 1999 after a peaceful protest near the Potala palace in Lhasa.

A foreign nongovernmental organization reported in June 2000 that Tashi Rabten, a monk at Thenthok monastery, died on May 1, 2000, after falling from a third floor window after interrogation by government officials. He allegedly protested the removal of the Dalai Lama's photographs during a raid of the monastery. Three other monks who also protested the removal of the photos allegedly were beaten severely.

In July 1999, Phuntsok Legmon, age 16, and Namdrol, age 21, two monks who had been detained and reportedly had been beaten severely the previous March after demonstrating in Barkhor Square in Lhasa, were sentenced to 3 and 4 years respectively in Drapchi prison.

A large number of monks and nuns have been detained and/or imprisoned. A number of individual such cases were cited by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture in his report to the 56th session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in the spring of 2000. The director of the Prison Administration Bureau told a visiting foreign delegation that there were over 100 monks and nuns imprisoned in the TAR's three prisons, of whom 90 percent were incarcerated for "endangering state security." There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism, and the death of prisoners; at least two major monasteries were closed for part of the period covered by this report. There are credible reports from a number of prisons that prisoners accused of political offenses who resisted political reeducation imposed by prison authorities, particularly demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy recognized by the Government as the Panchen Lama, also were beaten. The TIN reports severe beatings of several nuns serving long prison sentences, including Ngawang Choezon and Puntsog Nyidrol. Nun Ngawang Sangdrol also was beaten severely on multiple occasions and held in solitary confinement for an extended period, according to credible reports. Her prison sentence was extended for a third time in 1998, for taking part in demonstrations in prison, to a total of 21 years. Ngawang Sangdrol's health is reportedly poor, although government officials have claimed that her health is fine. The TIN reported that Gyaye Phuntsog, a 68-year-old monk from Qinghai province, may have been deprived of food and sleep for several days during his interrogation, prior to his release on medical parole during the summer of 1999. Several sources report that he is now unable to walk without the use of crutches.

Prisoners have resisted political reeducation imposed by prison authorities, particularly demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept the Panchen Lama appointed by the Government. According to the TIN, punishments meted out to uncooperative prisoner leaders have resulted in hunger strikes among female prisoners on at least two occasions at Drapchi prison. Officials also resort to lengthening periods of solitary confinement to isolate demonstrators.

The Government continued to hold Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who the Dalai Lama recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama, along with his family. Government officials have claimed that the boy is being held for his own protection and that he lives in Tibet and attends classes as a "normal schoolboy." The location of Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family remains unknown, and all requests from the international community for access to the boy to confirm his whereabouts and his wellbeing have been refused. The Government denied press reports in November 1999 that Gendun Choekyi Nyima died and was cremated secretly; however, the Government continued to refuse international observers access to the boy. The majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama; refugee monks in January 2000 told a foreign official that they believe that virtually all Tibetans hold this view. Tibetan monks have claimed that they were forced to sign statements pledging allegiance to the boy the Government selected as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Communist Party also urged its members to support the "official" Panchen Lama, and the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party committees at both the regional and city levels had pictures of the boy printed for use in public and private religious displays.

According to credible reports, Chadrel Rinpoche, who was accused by the Government of betraying state secrets while helping the Dalai Lama choose the incarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, has been held in a secret compound of a Sichuan prison where he has been separated from other prisoners, denied all outside contacts, and restricted to his cell since his 1997 sentence to 6 years' imprisonment after a trial that was closed to the public. The Government told a visiting foreign delegation that he is "fine physically."

The Chinese Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations; however, repression of religious freedom continued, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, many foreign groups, including NGO's and tourists, reported increasing restrictions on movements. Two NGO's, Medecins Sans Frontieres and the Tibet Heritage Fund, were threatened with expulsion. Restrictions on travel also were reported during the period covered by this report. The Government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials and official foreign visitors had few opportunities to meet local Tibetans not previously approved by the local authorities.



*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, there is societal pressure aimed at converts, some of whom reportedly have been disinherited by their families.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the Consulate General in Chengdu are making a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet. In regular exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibet. Embassy officials protest and seek further information on cases whenever there are credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination. Diplomatic personnel stationed in the country also regularly travel to Tibet to monitor conditions, including the status of religious freedom. However, the Special Coordinator for Tibet and a member of her staff were denied visas to travel to Tibet during the period covered by this report. U.S. officials maintain contacts with a wide spectrum of religious figures, and the Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in Tibet and religious groups in the United States. The Embassy, including the Ambassador and other senior officers, raised with government officials the cases of religious prisoners and reports of religious persecution. Senior embassy officials meet regularly with the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau and raised cases during those discussions. Cases raised by the Embassy include those of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, Abbot Chadrel Rinpoche, Ngawang Sangdrol, and other Tibetan monks and nuns. Other embassy officers raised specific cases in meetings with officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department.

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**TAIWAN**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the authorities respect this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both the authorities' policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The American Institute in Taiwan discusses religious freedom issues with the Taiwan authorities in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the authorities respect this right in practice. The authorities at all levels generally protect this right in full, and do not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Religious organizations may register with the central authorities through their island-wide associations under either the Temple Management Law, the Civic Organizations Law, or the chapter of the Civil Code that governs foundations and associations. While individual places of worship may register with local authorities, many choose not to register and operate as the personal property of their leaders. Registered organizations operate on a taxfree basis and are required to make annual reports of their financial operations. In the past, concern over abuse of tax-free privileges or other financial misdeeds occasionally prompted the authorities to deny registration to new religions whose doctrines were not clear, but there were no reports that the authorities sought to suppress new religions during the period covered by this report.

### *Religious Demography*

Approximately 50 percent of the population regularly participate in some form of organized religious practice. Sixteen religious organizations have registered with the Ministry of the Interior. While reliable statistics are not available, it can be estimated from registration figures provided to the Ministry of the Interior that of the total population approximately 22 percent are Buddhist; 22 percent are Taoist; 4 percent follow I Kuan Tao; 2 percent are Protestants; 1.5 percent are Roman Catholics; 1 percent follow Tien Li Chao (Heaven Reason Religion); 1 percent follow Tien Ti Chiao (Heaven Emperor Religion); 1 percent follow Tien Te Chiao (Heaven Virtue Religion); 0.7 percent follow Li-ism; 0.6 percent follow Hsuan Yuan Chiao (Yellow Emperor Religion); and .02 percent are Sunni Muslim. There are no statistics available for the three religions newly registered in 1999: Confucianism, Ta I Chao (Great Changes Religion), and Hai Tzu Chiao (Innocent Child Religion). It has also been estimated by knowledgeable observers that almost 14 percent of the population are atheists. Among the Protestants, the following denominations are represented among the population: Presbyterians, True Jesus, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Baptists, Lutherans, Seventh-Day Adventists, Episcopalians, and Jehovah's Witnesses. There are also small numbers of adherents of Judaism, the Baha'i Faith, Falun Gong, and the Mahikari religion. More than 70 percent of the indigenous population is Christian. The majority of religious adherents are either Buddhist or Taoist, but a large percentage consider themselves both Buddhist and Taoist.

Whatever their religion, many persons also follow a collection of beliefs that might be called "traditional Chinese folk religion," which is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture. These beliefs include, but are not limited to, shamanism, ancestor worship, magic, ghosts and other spirits, and aspects of animism. This folk religion may overlap with an individual's belief in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, or other traditional Chinese religions. Knowledgeable observers have estimated that perhaps as many as 80 percent of the population believe in some form of traditional folk religion.

Religious beliefs cross political and geographical lines. Individual members of Taiwan's political leadership practice various faiths, including minority religions.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely. For example, missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Watch Tower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) operate without restriction.

Religious instruction is not permitted in public or private schools at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. However, universities and research institutions have religious studies departments, and religious organizations operate theological seminaries.

The Ministry of the Interior promotes inter-faith understanding among religious groups by sponsoring symposiums (or helping to defray the expenses of privately sponsored symposiums) on religious issues.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners. However, there are 10 members of the Watch Tower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) who remain in prison for failing to follow orders while in military service. Nonetheless, there is no indication that members of the Watch Tower Society have been singled out for their beliefs. In late 1999, the Legislative Yuan passed legislation allowing for a civilian alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. The legislation would benefit members of the Watch Tower Society and others who previously had been imprisoned for failing to follow orders while in military service. The law is in the process of being implemented, and the program is expected to begin on July 1, 2000.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the authorities' refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Taiwan Council for Religion and Peace, the China Religious Believers Association, and the Taiwan Religious Association are private organizations that promote greater understanding and tolerance among adherents of the different religions. Those associations and various religious groups occasionally sponsor symposiums to promote mutual understanding.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The American Institute in Taiwan is in frequent contact with representatives of human rights organizations and occasionally meets with leaders of various religious communities.

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**FIJI**

The abrogated Constitution provided for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The status of the country's Constitution and political organization are uncertain as a result of the takeover of Parliament on May 19, 2000.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The status of the country's Constitution and political organization are uncertain as a result of the takeover of Parliament on May 19, 2000. The Constitution was abrogated by the military regime that deposed President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara on May 29, 2000; however, there was no change in religious freedom.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Constitution was abrogated by the military regime that deposed President Mara on May 29, 2000; however, there was no change in religious freedom.

The abrogated Constitution's article on the State and religion declared that religion and the State are separate, but that the citizenry acknowledged that worship of and reverence for God are the source of good government and leadership. This article reflected a compromise that was reached in negotiations on the Constitution to accommodate the strong Christian religious influence prevalent in the ethnic Fijian community as well as the concerns of the largely non-Christian (Hindu and Muslim) Indo-Fijian community.

The abrogated Constitution contained a detailed article with respect to the protection of freedom of religion and belief. The article stated that individuals have the right to freedom of conscience, religion, and belief; the right to manifest their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, or teaching; the right not to receive religious instruction or to take part in religious ceremonies; and that persons cannot be compelled to take an oath that is contrary to their religion or belief.

*Religious Demography*

The dominant religion is Methodism, followed by Roman Catholicism; however, many other Christian denominations also are represented in the country. The Methodist Church is supported by the majority of the country's chiefs and remains influential in the ethnic Fijian community, particularly in rural areas. The nonethnic Fijian community, which constitutes slightly less than half the population, consists primarily of Indo-Fijians and, in much smaller numbers, Europeans who are the descendants of colonial settlers. The European community is predominantly Christian (Methodist). The Hindu faith is predominant within the Indo-Fijian community. The Muslim (Sunni) minority makes up approximately 10 percent of the Indo-Fijian community. Both the Hindu and Muslim communities have a number of active religious and cultural organizations. There are a small number of apparently cult-like organizations.

The Government does not restrict foreign clergy and missionary activity or other typical activities of religious organizations. There are numerous Christian missionary organizations that are active nationally and regionally in social welfare, health, and education. Many major Christian denominations and notably the Methodist Church have missionaries in the country; they operate numerous religious schools, including colleges, which are not subsidized by the Government.

The Government partly sponsors an annual ecumenical prayer festival.

The role of religion continues to be a political issue. In the past, former Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka publicly indicated his willingness to consider making the country "a Christian state"; however, he helped to create the new Constitution's

compromise language. Several predominantly ethnic Fijian political parties contesting the 1999 general elections called for a Christian state and the reintroduction of measures to mandate respect for Christian values, such as a ban on Sunday for all but essential services. (Fiji introduced such a ban following the two 1987 coups, but it was lifted in 1995.) Other parties, which are dominated by Indo-Fijians, do not support such actions and insist that church and state should remain separate. The president of the Methodist Church has stated that the church has no official role in politics. However, numbers of senior Methodist leaders, including a past church president, were candidates for office in the 1999 general elections. The Christian Democratic Party used the Methodist Church headquarters to hold the swearing-in ceremony for its candidates.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. However, the largest societal divide in the country remains ethnic, not religious, between the ethnic Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities.

Incidents of desecration of Hindu temples in 1997 continue to be under investigation. There were no reports of any attacks on religious institutions during the period covered by this report.

The Muslim Indo-Fijian community, which is a minority within the Indo-Fijian community, at times indicated that it is neglected and discriminated against by the predominantly Hindu Indian community.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy actively supports efforts to improve and expand governmental and societal awareness of and protection for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy met with leaders of many religious communities during the period covered by this report. Embassy officers also met with nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in religious freedom. Embassy officers made consular visits to one apparently cult-like organization to ascertain the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens.

## INDONESIA

The Constitution provides for religious freedom for members of five of the six officially recognized religions and belief in one supreme God, and the Government generally respects these provisions; however, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity, including unrecognized religions. The law officially "embraces" six religions—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The Government generally respects the freedom to worship of adherents to each of these religions. Presidential Decree No. 6, promulgated in January 2000, lifted severe legal restrictions on the practice of Confucianism that had existed since 1967. While only these six religions are recognized officially, the law states that other religions are not forbidden. A few groups are banned explicitly, including Jehovah's Witnesses, whose adherents may experience difficulty processing civil matters like marriage. Likewise, citizens who are members of religions other than the six officially recognized may be obliged to identify themselves as Catholics, Muslims, etc., in order to obtain national identity cards or process other civil matters.

The Government's level of respect for religious freedom remained generally constant during the period covered by this report; however, religious intolerance within society became markedly more visible and was manifested in scores of violent incidents in Maluku, Sulawesi, Lombok, and elsewhere.

There were numerous attacks on churches in various locations throughout the country, ranging from minor damage to total destruction; only a few cases, if any, were investigated thoroughly, and there were no reports that any perpetrators were punished. Mosques also were targeted for attack in some instances, especially dur-

ing the ongoing inter-religious strife in North Maluku and Maluku provinces (also known as the Molucca Islands), and around Poso, Central Sulawesi. Religious intolerance led to violence in several regions, particularly in the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi. It generally is estimated that approximately 4,000 persons have been killed in the Moluccas strife since violence erupted in January 1999. The victims were roughly equally divided between Christians and Muslims. In addition to inter-communal violence in Maluku and North Maluku provinces, significant religious conflict also occurred on the islands of Sulawesi and Lombok. Churches and other Christian facilities continued to be targeted for attack in Java, where Muslims are a majority, although not to the extent to which they were targeted in 1996-97.

The U.S. discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for religious freedom for members of five of the six officially recognized religions and belief in one supreme God, and the Government generally respects these provisions; however, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity, including unrecognized religions. Law No. 1/1965 states that the Government “embraces” Islam, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Law No. 14/1967 on Chinese Worship, Religion and Customs restricted severely the practice of Confucianism by, for example, confining Chinese worship, religion and customs to the home and temple; however, in January 2000, Presidential Decree No. 6/2000 revoked the 1967 restrictive legislation. While the law formally “embraces” only these six religions, it explicitly states that other religions, including Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, and Taoism are not forbidden. The Government permits the practice of other religions, including Sikhism and the mystical, traditional beliefs called “Aliran Kepercayaan.” The Government bans other faiths, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and some Islamic groups. The People’s Consultative Assembly adopted a new Human Rights Charter in November 1998 which provides citizens the freedom to practice their religion, without specifying any particular religions.

The legal requirement to adhere to the official state ideology, “Pancasila,” extends to all religious and secular organizations. Because the first tenet of Pancasila is belief in one supreme God, atheism is forbidden. Although individuals are not compelled to practice any particular faith, all citizens must classify themselves as members of one of the six officially recognized religions. As this choice must be noted on official documents, such as the identification card, failure to identify a religion can make it impossible to obtain such documents. Members of other religious communities must be identified with one of the six sanctioned religions. For example, Sikhs generally are classified as Hindus. Prior to the passage of Presidential Decree No. 6/2000, Confucians were required to identify themselves as one of the other officially recognized religions; however, according to domestic news reports, as of May 2000, approximately 100 persons had succeeded in obtaining recognition as adherents of Confucianism on their identification cards.

The Government continues to oppose strongly any Muslim group that advocates the establishment of an Islamic state or the supplanting of civil law with Sharia (Islamic law). However, at times it was reluctant to challenge extreme Muslim groups openly (see Section II).

##### *Religious Demography*

The population, estimated at 211,000,000 persons, is approximately 85 percent Muslim, 10 percent Christian, 2 percent Hindu, and 1 to 1.5 percent Buddhist, with the remainder members of other religions. Animism still is practiced in remote regions of Kalimantan and Papua (also known as Irian Jaya).

Muslims are the majority population in most regions of Sumatra and Java. Muslims also predominate in regions of Sulawesi and Kalimantan and are present as minorities in most other parts of the country. The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni, although there also are Shi’a and adherents of Sufism, Ahmadiyah, and other branches of Islam. The Muslim community primarily breaks down into two groups: “modernist,” mainly urban communities, which adhere more closely to orthodox Sunni theology, and larger “traditionalist” communities, composed mainly of rural Javanese Muslims, who incorporate some elements of Javanese mysticism, Hinduism, and Buddhism into their practice of Islam.

Most Christians reside in the eastern part of the country. Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion in the provinces of Nusa Tenggara Timor and southeast Maluku, while Protestantism is the predominant religion in central and north

Maluku. In the easternmost province of Papua, Protestants are predominant in the north, and Catholics are the majority in the south. Other significant Christian populations are located in North Sumatra, seat of the influential Batak Protestant Church, which in early 1999 reunited after a government-manipulated division in 1993. There also are significant Christian populations in west and central Java, and in Kalimantan. Many urban Sino-Indonesians adhere to Christian faiths as well.

Migration, both government-sponsored and spontaneous, gradually is increasing the Muslim population in the eastern part of the country. Some Christian critics have alleged that the Government has attempted to alter the demographic balance of the eastern part of the country by resettling Muslims in the area and providing various subsidies for those who settle spontaneously. The critics claim that growing communal violence in eastern Indonesia is a product of this policy (see Section II). However, government programs have not sponsored most Muslims who have moved into the region.

Most Hindus live in Bali, where they form about 93 percent of the population. Balinese Hinduism has developed various local characteristics that distinguish it from Hinduism as practiced on the Indian subcontinent. There also is a significant Hindu minority (the Keharingan) in central Kalimantan.

Seven schools of Buddhism are practiced in the country: Buddhayana, Mahayana, Theravada, Tridharma, Kasogatan, Nichiren, and Maitreya. Most, but not all, Buddhists are of ethnic Chinese origin. Like the Sino-Indonesian population, most Buddhists are located in major urban and trading centers, rather than rural areas.

The Government actively promotes mutual tolerance and harmony among officially recognized religions. Citizens practicing the recognized religions maintain active links with coreligionists inside and outside the country and travel abroad for religious gatherings. The Government both facilitates and regulates Muslims' participation in the annual Hajj pilgrimages to Mecca.

For the first time since the beginning of the Soeharto regime, religiously oriented parties, predominantly Islamic but including some Christian, were allowed to form and to contest the June 1999 parliamentary elections. Christian parties received relatively few votes; Muslim parties won about 30 percent of the vote. Of the Muslim parties, those with moderate views on the role of Islam in government and society dominated. Parties that strongly advocated an Islamization of government policy won a small percentage of the vote and few parliamentary seats.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Restrictions exist on certain types of religious activity, including restrictions on officially recognized religions. For example, a number of regulations enacted subsequent to the passage of Law No. 1/1965 severely restrict some religious groups. Moreover, a 1976 decision by the Attorney General, reinforced by a separate decision by the same office in 1978, banned Jehovah's Witnesses from practicing their faith. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that significant abuse, including detention and torture, lasted until 1997. Although government hostility toward Jehovah's Witnesses has subsided, open practice of the faith remains banned, and members report that they continue to experience difficulty registering marriages, enrolling children in school, and in other civil matters. The Government in some provinces banned the messianic Islamic school, Darul Arqam; the Government also bans the Al-Ma'Unah school in some provinces. Members of the Baha'i faith did not report problems during the period covered by this report. The Government closely monitors Islamic groups considered to be deviating from orthodox tenets and in the past has dissolved such groups. Historically, the Government has tried to control "heterodox" Muslim groups, due to pressure by nongovernmental leaders of "mainstream" or "orthodox" Muslim groups as well as the Government's concern for national unity. In addition "mainstream" Christian leaders have influenced government policy against "fundamentalist" Christians. Non-Trinitarians (Jehovah's Witnesses) have faced government bans that they claim were instigated by Trinitarian Christians. After the passage of Presidential Decree No. 6/2000, Confucianists, who in the past were restricted severely, were permitted to celebrate publicly the Chinese New Year for the first time in over 30 years.

A 1969 regulation dictates that before a house of worship can be built, agreement must be obtained from local residents living near the site, and a license must be obtained from the regional office of the Ministry of Religion. Some Christians claim that this regulation is used to discriminate against them and to prevent them from building churches. Despite the problems, the building of churches continued, sometimes without permits. Muslims contend that Christians, in some instances, seek to erect churches in areas with small Christian populations with the aim of creating a base in a Muslim area in order to proselytize.

The law allows for conversion between faiths, and such conversions do occur. Independent observers note that it has become increasingly difficult to gain official recognition of inter-faith marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims. Persons from religions outside the six accepted religions also have difficulty in getting their marriages recognized officially.

The Government views proselytizing by recognized religions in areas heavily dominated by another recognized religion as potentially disruptive and discourages it. Foreign missionary activities are relatively unimpeded, although in Papua, and occasionally elsewhere, missionaries have experienced difficulties and delays in renewing residence permits. In addition visas allowing the entrance of new foreign clergy sometimes are difficult to obtain. Foreigners present in the country holding tourist visas may be deported for proselytizing. Laws and decrees from the 1970's limit the number of years that foreign missionaries can spend in the country; some extensions were granted in remote areas like Papua. Foreign missionary work is subject to the funding stipulations of the 1984 ORMAS law, which regulates the activities of all nongovernment "mass" organizations in the country.

The October 1999 election of Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid as President was greeted with optimism by Christians and members of other religious minority groups because of his longstanding advocacy of religious tolerance and harmony. In addition to Muslims, Wahid appointed Christians, a Hindu, and a Buddhist to his Cabinet. Wahid continued actively to promote tolerance as President, and demonstrated his commitment to religious freedom by calling on leaders of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and others during their religious festivals.

The Government's level of respect for religious freedom remained generally constant during the period covered by this report; however, religious intolerance within society became markedly more visible and was manifested in scores of violent incidents in Maluku, Sulawesi, Lombok, and elsewhere (see Section II).

The most widespread inter-religious violence erupted in the Moluccas, where several hundred houses of worship, both mosques and churches, were destroyed and thousands of persons were killed as Christians and Muslims waged an internecine conflict (see Section II).

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Religious violence and the lack of an effective government response to punish perpetrators and prevent further attacks led to allegations that officials were complicit in some of the incidents or, at a minimum, allowed them to occur with impunity. Although the President and other officials repeatedly have criticized instances of inter-religious violence, the Government's efforts to end or reduce such violence generally have not been effective. The Government continued to demonstrate reluctance to intervene in mob attacks on houses of worship. Security forces proved ineffective in controlling the violence in North Maluku and Maluku provinces, where both Christians and Muslims repeatedly were targeted for attack on the basis of their religion and ethnic group.

In North Maluku and Maluku provinces Christian sources alleged that elements of the security forces were biased against them. For example, predominantly Muslim units dispatched from Java and Sulawesi allegedly sided with Muslim vigilantes and used excessive force against Christians. In other instances, security forces appeared to be biased against Muslims. For example, Muslims on Ambon charged that members of the predominantly Christian police force also were partial in helping their coreligionists. There was no evidence to suggest that the security forces, as an institution, supported one side or the other. Some individuals and some units occasionally sided with their coreligionists, but their actions appeared to be random and contrary to orders. In fact some military troops were detained and interrogated for allegedly openly siding with militia in at least one episode on Haruku; however, there were no reports that such perpetrators ever were punished. Several hundred police officers have themselves been attacked, and some even killed because of their religion; hundreds of police members and their families, as well as numerous other government officials, are among the refugees.

Reviving a centuries-old Ambonese practice, in March 2000, the provincial government enlisted Muslims and Christians to cooperate in the reconstruction of two major places of worship that were destroyed during rioting, Silo Church and An'nur Mosque (see Section II). In a highly publicized ceremony, the governor, the Vice President, and others, presided over the laying of cornerstones for each building. However, as of mid-2000, workers had made little progress.

In response to heightened violence in the Moluccas in the first half of 2000 (see Section II), on June 23, 2000, President Wahid banned all travel to the Moluccas; on June 26, 2000, the President declared a state of civil emergency. However, during

the period covered by this report, the Government was unable to suppress the violence or fully contain the flow of fighters and weapons to the Moluccas.

In contrast the governors of the provinces of Sulawesi, working with military and police leaders, responded to the outbreak of communal violence in the Poso area in the first quarter of 2000 by implementing a comprehensive program to prevent the violence from spreading. This response included investigation and detention of suspects, comprehensive weapons searches, and an effort to return refugees to their home villages as soon as possible. As of mid-2000, this response seemed to have halted the cycle of retaliation.

In East Timor, before and after the August 30, 1999 vote in favor of independence, pro-Indonesia militias killed numerous Catholic priests and nuns who were engaged in humanitarian activities and destroyed many Catholic places of worship, many of which were being used to shelter thousands of internally displaced persons (IDP's). In general the abuses were not motivated by religious differences but by pro-Indonesia militia groups' efforts to discourage a vote for independence and later to take revenge after their efforts failed.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners during the period covered by this report.

In the summer of 1999, two Christians, one a pastor, one a parishioner, were sentenced to 5- to 10-year prison terms in a sensational case in Padang, West Sumatra. Salmon Ongirwale was convicted of kidnaping in connection with his relationship with a Muslim woman, then a minor. The pastor was convicted as an accomplice. Some members of the Muslim community, including the woman's parents, alleged that the two persons had plotted to kidnap their daughter and force her to convert to Christianity. Members of the Christian community alleged that the defendants had been charged and tried unfairly, and were singled out for such harsh treatment because they were Christians.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The concept of religious freedom generally is accepted within society. Religious organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), and individuals regularly conduct programs and activities aimed at promoting tolerance and cooperation between different religious communities. In the political sphere, leading government and opposition political figures regularly address the need for inter-religious harmony. Several of the major political opposition parties and the current ruling coalition are nonsectarian.

There were markedly fewer reports of specifically anti-Chinese violence during the period covered by this report. While attacks on ethnic Chinese churches clearly reflect religious tensions, other contributing factors are underlying socioeconomic and political tensions between Muslims and relatively more affluent Sino-Indonesians.

During the period covered by this report, groups that actively advocate a more prominent role for Islam in society continued to emerge. However, there currently is minimal public support for the establishment of an Islamic state. The Government continues to oppose Muslim groups that advocate the establishment of an Islamic state or the supplanting of civil law with Shari'a (Islamic law). However, some Islamic political parties and Islamic groups advocate the establishment of what they describe as "an Islamic society."

In early 2000, a movement known as the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) emerged on university campuses in Java. There were sporadic reports from some neighborhoods of Jakarta that student followers of the NII movement set up roadblocks, checked identification cards, and harassed passing non-Muslims, in some cases forcing them to recite passages from the Koran. Similar incidents took place in Makassar, South Sulawesi.

Another Muslim group that appeared in early 2000, the Laskar Jihad ("holy war troops") engaged in paramilitary training and moved about freely, armed with swords, daggers, and spears. Some members of the movement reportedly believed that they could "enter heaven by killing infidels." Leaders of the group announced that they were planning to wage war on Christians in the Moluccas. The Government clearly was reluctant to challenge them openly. The Government did close a conspicuous Laskar Jihad training camp south of Jakarta, but as of June 2000, the group had not been disbanded. Many of its recruits were deployed to Maluku and North Maluku provinces starting in late April 2000; some continued training else-



where. In Yogyakarta, central Java, members of the Laskar Jihad openly called for intervention in the Moluccas, while others collected funds for Laskar Jihad on street corners.

There were numerous instances of attacks on churches, mosques, temples, and other religious facilities between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000. Christian groups recorded 135 attacks in which churches and other Christian facilities were closed, damaged, or burned during this time (including the violence in the Moluccas and Sulawesi). The attacks ranged in severity from broken windowpanes to total destruction. For example, on December 15, 1999, Muslim crowds burned and ransacked a Christian seminary and a social service complex in southeast Jakarta, killing 1 person in the process and injuring 20 others. According to many Christian officials, the anti-Christian sentiment behind this violence is not new, but the impunity associated with such acts is. This has contributed significantly to such attacks since Soeharto resigned in May 1998. There are no available national estimates of how many mosques were damaged or destroyed during the period covered by this report. The Government did not investigate fully most cases of attacks on religious facilities that occurred during riots, and in other cases, did not investigate such incidents at all.

There also were reports of preaching and publications against Christians, which led to concerns that societal support for religious tolerance was under pressure.

In the Jakarta and other incidents, interethnic tensions, as well as inter-religious tensions, were factors that contributed to the violence. Other factors included a general breakdown in civil and military authority and a concomitant rise in societal violence, as citizens took justice into their own hands. Security forces, which have been criticized widely for previous human rights violations, for reasons such as lack of training, fear of criticism, and the potential for legal restriction, showed reluctance to intervene, as they routinely did under previous regimes, to stop religious and ethnic disputes from turning violent.

During the period covered by this report, thousands of citizens were attacked by other citizens, and according to multiple sources (at times, official) perhaps as many as 4,000 to 5,000 persons were killed, largely because of their religious identity in North Maluku and Maluku provinces and in Central Sulawesi province in the eastern part of the country. Over 300,000 persons were displaced internally. Some Christian IDP's from Ambon fled to the southeastern part of the province; others fled to North Maluku; and many others fled to North Sulawesi province, which is predominantly Christian in many areas. Muslim IDP's from Ambon fled to parts of North Maluku; others fled to South and Southeast Sulawesi provinces. Many of these IDP's carried the conflict with them.

In North Maluku alone, provincial statistics listed 97 mosques and 106 churches burned, as Christians and Muslims waged an internecine conflict. Other mosques and churches were attacked and many destroyed in parts of Maluku province and in Poso, Central Sulawesi. This represented the most widespread inter-religious violence during the period covered by this report. The fighting in all three provinces had political, economic, ethnic, and religious overtones. While initial conflicts emerged over land tenure issues and the political and economic status of local residents versus transmigrants, in many cases the conflicts later evolved into highly charged religious clashes.

Inter-religious fighting in the Moluccas, which began in Ambon on January 19, 1999, spread in sporadic but steady waves from Ambon to neighboring islands in the central and southern areas of the Moluccas from July to December 1999. The use of firearms, mostly homemade but increasingly sophisticated, grew, as did the number of deaths. Buildings in the central business district of Ambon, many of them Chinese-owned, were destroyed in late July 1999 and early August 1999, marking the first time that major fighting spread from outlying neighborhoods. Allegations of outside provocation and interference rose during this period, and authorities came under increasing criticism for failing to halt the violence or actively abetting it (see Section I).

From December 1999 and continuing to June 30, 2000, religious clashes rapidly spread to most major islands in the Moluccas. Violence erupted in North Maluku province after Christmas as Christian gangs and militia (and to a lesser extent, Muslim gangs and militia) launched offensives against isolated villages.

Meanwhile, IDP's fleeing conflict-torn areas of Ambon island poured into the city of Ambon. Many directed their anger against Ambon; extensive damage resulted in which numerous houses, shops, and places of worship were burned. Predominantly Muslim military units dispatched from Java and Sulawesi were accused of siding with Muslim vigilantes and using excessive force against Christians. Muslims on Ambon charged that the predominantly Christian police force also was acting with bias (see Section I), and Christian gangs also were guilty of severe attacks.

On December 28, 1999, Christian militia invaded a small Muslim town in north Halmahera Island (North Maluku province) and massacred at least 113 men, women, and children in and around a mosque. Several hundred more persons died in other attacks, apparently initiated by Christian gangs.

Following the December 1999 incident, Muslims became more militant. During the first half of the year 2000, they drove Christian populations away from many areas of North Maluku and Maluku provinces. As IDP's fled to neighboring areas and islands, their resentment against those who had attacked them often sparked conflict in their new places of residence.

In response to the increased violence, the armed forces deployed fresh troops to the Moluccas in January 2000. In Ambon, army, marines, and police personnel enforced a curfew and began disarming civilians in house-to-house searches. By late January 2000, a semblance of normality had returned to Ambon. However, internecine fighting escalated in Halmahera and other parts of North Maluku (including Bacan, Obi, and Morotai islands) and in Maluku (Seram and Buru islands).

By April 2000, there were some signs of reconciliation in Ambon as the provincial government inaugurated reconstruction programs and markets were established in border areas. The cease-fire in Ambon abruptly ended in late April 2000, when serious rioting immediately broke out upon the conclusion of Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri's visit. There was a further upsurge in violence in mid-May as boatloads of Laskar Jihad volunteers (ultimately reaching 2,000 to 3,000 persons) began arriving in Ambon and other parts of the Moluccas. Periodic waves of violence and destruction continued in Ambon during the weeks that followed. Law and order continued to deteriorate steadily, all but collapsing by late June 2000, when violent mobs stormed through the city with little or no interference by the security forces.

In May and June 2000, there were large-scale Muslim attacks against Christians in Halmahera, in apparent revenge for the January 2000 massacre. There were further allegations that the security forces were taking sides in the fighting (see Section I). For example, on June 19, 2000, about 4,000 Muslims surrounded the town of Duma and killed from 110 to 180 largely defenseless Christians before burning down their church. Laskar Jihad later claimed that it was involved, but locally based Muslim groups primarily were responsible. The military forces admitted that they stood aside because troops were outnumbered (officials have alleged that only 70 to 100 troops were available at the time). Other witnesses (including a local Laskar Jihad leader) claimed that at least six soldiers joined the Muslims in the attack. However, troops were able to prevent 300 Christian gang members from counterattacking days later.

On June 23, 2000, President Wahid announced a ban on all travel to Maluku and North Maluku provinces; however, the ban was enforced loosely. On June 26, 2000, the President declared a state of civil emergency for both provinces (see Section I).

It is estimated that over 2,000 persons died in the Moluccas between January and June 2000, and that 300,000 persons, or 15 percent of the population, were displaced internally. These population movements have resulted, in effect, in the partition of the Moluccas into Muslim and Christian areas. For example, in Ternate the original population of 105,000 persons included 15,000 Christians. During the period covered by this report, all Christians fled, and 80,000 Muslim IDP's arrived from elsewhere in the same province.

While religious tension and hatreds have been the main sources of intercommunal warfare in the Moluccas, the conflict partly is rooted in social, political, and economic grievances among the many diverse communities living there. In some cases, Muslims and Christians from the same or affiliated ethnic groups banded together and attacked Muslim migrants from another, distant ethnic group. This phenomenon occurred in Halmahera in the clash between the villages of Kao (local Christian and Muslim ethnic groups) and Malifut (largely settled by Muslim transmigrants from the island of Makian). In addition unverified reports of provocators and conspiracies have fueled what has become a continuous cycle of violence. Both sides claim that outside agitators helped trigger the violence. Both insist that coreligionists fought back only after being assaulted by persons of the opposite religion. Furthermore, traditional leadership structures have eroded, leaving conflicting groups without a respected and effective mechanism for resolving intercommunal and interreligious tensions.

In January 2000, there were anti-Christian riots in Mataram, Lombok. Several rioters were killed and numerous persons were injured in the violence. In addition Muslim gangs destroyed, damaged, and looted Christian homes, businesses, and other property. Thousands of Christians fled the violence. However, by the end of January 2000 the situation became calmer, and as of June 30, 2000, reports of further violence were rare; nevertheless, tensions remained.

Small-scale rioting broke out in pockets of Makassar, South Sulawesi on January 17 and 18, 2000. The problem began when about 2,000 Muslim gang members began stopping motorists in front of Hasanuddin University, demanding identification to determine religious affiliation, and in at least six cases, dragging out and beating Christians "in retaliation for what happened to their brothers in Maluku."

On January 30, 2000, there was a series of attacks on churches in Yogyakarta, central Java. The problem began after a Muslim rally of from 10,000 to 20,000 persons to protest the inter-religious violence in the Moluccas ended. Hundreds of participants drove through the city on motorcycles and threw rocks through the windows of eight churches, a Christian campus dormitory, and two houses.

Beginning in late May 2000, the area of Poso in Central Sulawesi, as well as numerous villages in the region, experienced renewed religious riots and violence, resulting in numerous deaths and widespread destruction. Christian gangs from surrounding villages reportedly expelled Muslims from the town of Poso in retaliation for past hostilities, which included the burning of hundreds of Christians' houses in the preceding months. In the most serious incident, Christian gangs brutally murdered well over 100 unarmed Muslims in a small village outside Poso. Foreign Christian missionaries, who were worried about the possible spread of religious violence, fled Central Sulawesi. While Christian gangs and militia burned mosques and Muslim houses, Muslim gangs and militia reportedly burned what Christian property they could while fleeing town. As of June 10, 2000, over 120 persons were confirmed dead. The most recent casualty estimate listed 214 victims, and casualty estimates ranged as high as 500 persons dead. Over 2,000 houses were destroyed in the Poso area. Both Christian and Muslim outsiders were accused of helping to instigate the violence.

Between July 1999 and July 2000, there were a number of reports of persons who practice traditional medicine magic ("dukun santets") being killed. In the Malang area of East Java, villagers broke into the home of suspected shamans in the middle of the night on January 18, 2000, and beat to death a 45-year-old woman in front of her teenage sons. The mob then dragged her body to a cemetery and hung it from a tree, where it hung until dawn. That morning, 200 villagers turned themselves in to the local police station. The police stated that they were searching for the "true instigators" of the violence; no arrests were made. Since then, more individuals were attacked for suspected shamanism in the Pasuruan area of East Java. While it is difficult to estimate accurately the frequency of such attacks, journalists believe that lynch killings still occur. Aside from killings, "dukun santets" faced other constraints on their freedom. For example, in Banyuwangi, East Java, many known shamans essentially were forced (by the authorities) to migrate to Bali to get them out of "harm's way." Many others were forced to renounce their craft by local Muslim leaders who told them that it was forbidden by Muslim law.

In West Kalimantan, 40,000 persons who were displaced by communal fighting in early 1999 remained in temporary camps as of June 2000. They were displaced as a result of clashes between groups composed of Dayaks (mostly Christian or animist) and Melayu (mostly Muslim) on one side and Madurese migrants (Muslims) on the other. Ethnic differences and tensions between indigenous people and newcomers appeared to be the source of the conflict, rather than religious differences.

Muslims are a religious minority in the easternmost province of Papua (also known as Irian Jaya). Local sentiment against the efforts of Muslim missionaries to win converts in the predominantly Christian province, as well as resentment of the arrival in the province of mainly Muslim migrants from other parts of the country either under government sponsored "transmigration" programs or with the encouragement of various government incentives, has in the past led to attacks on mosques in Papua. However, there were no reports of attacks on mosques in Papua during the period covered by this report. Nevertheless, tensions stemming from ethnic differences and economic disparities remain and sometimes are expressed in religious terms.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government publicly criticized the intercommunal violence that occurred in various parts of the country by continually: expressing its deep concern with the ongoing cycle of violence and retaliation between Christian and Muslim communities in the Moluccas and elsewhere; urging the Government to take further measures to prevent bloodshed and take action against those who initiate violence, while adhering to international standards for the protection of human rights and exercising appropriate restraint; and calling on all parties to show restraint, refrain from violence, and resolve their differences through dialog and negotiation.

With respect to the violence between Christian and Muslim communities in the Moluccas, Central Sulawesi, and elsewhere, President Clinton and other senior U.S. Government officials raised their concerns with Indonesian counterparts on numerous occasions.

The Ambassador and embassy and consulate Surabaya staff routinely conveyed to government officials at all levels the U.S. view that religious freedom must be respected. In addition throughout the period covered by this report, the Ambassador and embassy and consulate staff regularly met with leaders of religious communities and traveled widely throughout the country to keep abreast of developments affecting religious freedom.

During the period covered by this report, the public affairs section of the Embassy funded the travel of several persons under the International Visitors program, as well as exchange visitors, to study human rights and religion in the U.S., among other topics. They included religious and student leaders, and legal activists from Aceh, Papua, East Timor, and other locations. The Fulbright Commission in Indonesia funded one senior U.S. scholar to teach comparative religion at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) in Jakarta and a senior U.S. scholar/researcher who studied and taught women's role in Koranic verse at the same institution.

The U.S. Government also provides significant funding for NGO's that implement projects to promote religious tolerance in various parts of the country.

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## JAPAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There are virtually no barriers to registering new religions, and organized religious groups enjoy generous tax benefits.

The Government does not require that religious groups be licensed. However, to receive official recognition as a religious organization, which brings tax benefits and other advantages, a group must register with local or national authorities as a "religious corporation." In practice almost all religious groups register. In response to Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attacks in 1995, a 1996 amendment to the Religious Corporation Law gives governmental authorities increased oversight of religious groups and requires greater disclosure of financial assets by religious corporations. The Cultural Affairs Agency estimates that nearly 5,000 religious groups across the nation appear dormant. In May 1998, the Matsuyama District Court ordered the dissolution of a registered Shinto religious group that had been dormant since 1982. This was the first time that a court had accepted the Cultural Affairs Agency's request to dissolve a religious body since the Religious Corporation Law went into effect in 1951. However, in June 1998, the Nagoya High Court upheld a lower court ruling ordering the Toyama prefectural government to pay monetary damages to 88 followers of a Buddhist group for violating their rights by ignoring for more than 10 years their application for certification as a religious group. Aum Shinrikyo, officially renamed Aleph in February 2000, lost its legal status as a religious corporation in 1996 following the indictment of several members.

Some Buddhist and Shinto temples and shrines receive public support as national historic or cultural sites. However, this situation may change in the aftermath of a 1997 Supreme Court ruling that a prefectural government may not contribute public funds to only one religious organization, if the donations supported, encouraged, and promoted a specific religious group. In July 1998, the Kochi District Court ruled that using village government funds to repair two Shinto shrines was tantamount to allocating public funds to a religious group and therefore was unconstitutional.

### *Religious Demography*

Participation in religious activities by the public is low, and accurately determining the proportions of adherents to specific religions is difficult. According to statistics published by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 1998, 49.2 percent of citizens adhered to Buddhism, 44.7 percent to Shintoism, 5.3 percent to so-called "new" religions, and 0.8 percent to Christianity. However, a 1996 Jiji Press Service poll showed that 46.6 percent of the population identified themselves with no particular religious group, 44.3 percent choose Buddhism, 3.2 percent Shintoism, 3.1 percent "new" religions, and 1.0 percent Christianity. A 1994 poll indicated that less than 7 percent of the population regularly took part in formal religious services. Shintoism and Buddhism are not mutually exclusive religions; most members claim to observe both.

The major Buddhist sects are Tendai, Shingon, Joudo, Zen, Nichiren, and Nara. In addition to traditional Buddhist orders, there are a number of Buddhist lay organizations, including the 8-million-plus-member Soka Gakkai. The three main schools of Shintoism are Jinja, Kyoha, and Shinkyohoha.

Among Christians, both Catholic and Protestant denominations enjoy modest followings.

Faiths classified as New Religions include both local chapters of international religions such as the Unification Church of Japan and the Church of Scientology as well as the Tenrikyo, Seichounoie, Sekai Kyusei Kyo, Perfect Liberty, and Risho Koseikai religions, which were founded in Japan.

A small segment of the population, mostly foreign-born residents, attend Orthodox, Jewish, and Islamic services.

There are no known restrictions on proselytizing.

### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In September 1999, the Jehovah's Witnesses alleged that police maintain surveillance of church activities. The Government denies that it monitors the activities of the group or other recognized religious groups.

The only religion under active government surveillance is the Aum Shinrikyo "cult," which also was designated by the U.S. Department of State as a terrorist organization following the cult's 1995 Sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway system. Aum Shinrikyo lost its legal status as a religious organization in 1996 following the indictment of several cult members. It reportedly has an estimated 2,000 followers, down from 10,000 in 1995. From October 1999 through mid-2000, the Tokyo District Court gave death sentences to four of the five senior cult members guilty of the release of the Sarin gas. The exception, former Aum physician Ikuo Hayashi, had been sentenced in October 1998 to life imprisonment for his "cooperative and repentant" attitude. Cases still are pending in district courts against other senior Aum members, including cult leader Shoko Asahara. In March 2000, the Tokyo District Court ordered the cult to pay 688 million yen (\$640,000) to survivors and next-of-kin to those killed in the attack. As of mid-2000, Aum had remitted but one installment of the damages awarded, and authorities publicly expressed concern that the cult is hiding and diverting funds to other purposes.

In February 2000, the Education Ministry asked officials of Saitama prefecture to reverse their decision not to allow two 6-year-old daughters of Aum Shinrikyo cult members to attend the local elementary school. However, the national Government did not intervene in decisions by local school administrators in Ibaraki and Tochigi prefectures in 2000 to block the registration of three children of Aum founder Shoko Asahara.

Members of the Unification Church have alleged that police do not act in response to allegations of forced deprogramming of church members. In April 2000, a national Diet legislator raised this allegation in a committee session. National Policy Agency and Ministry of Justice officials considered the member's request for "appropriate actions," but took no action during the period covered by this report.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities. There were few reports of physical violence against members of religious organizations. At least eight municipalities in which Aum facilities are active refused to register group members as residents; other communities continued to block the establishment of new Aum settlements through protests and public appeals through mid-2000.

Members of the Unification Church alleged in June 1999 that police do not act in response to allegations of forced deprogramming of church members (see Section I). They also claimed that police do not enforce the laws against kidnaping when the victim is held by family members and that Unification Church members are subjected to prolonged detention by individuals, who are not charged by police. In September 1999, the Jehovah's Witnesses asserted that their members are mistreated similarly.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights including the promotion of religious freedom internationally. The U.S. Embassy maintains periodic contact with representatives of religious organizations.

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**KIRIBATI**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

*Religious Demography*

There is no state or politically dominant religion. The State does not favor a particular religion, nor are there separate categories for different religions.

Christianity was introduced widely into the area by missionaries in the 19th century. Major religions include: the Roman Catholic Church; the Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC), formerly the Congregational Church; Seventh-Day Adventists; the Baha'i Faith; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Roman Catholics are the dominant Christian denomination and constitute an estimated 54 percent of the population; members of the KPC constitute an estimated 38 percent. Other religious groups each account for 1 to 2 percent of the population. Persons with no religious preference account for about 5 percent of the population.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Christianity, the religion more than 90 percent of the population, is a dominant social and cultural force, but there are amicable relations between the country's religions. Nonbelievers, who constitute a very small percentage of the residents, do not suffer discrimination. Virtually all governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister, cleric, or church official.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

**DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

The Constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief;" however, in practice the Government discourages organized religious activity except that which is supervised by officially recognized groups. Genuine religious freedom does not exist.

Overall, there was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, there were several unconfirmed reports of executions of members of underground Christian churches.

There was some easing of religious discrimination policies in the late 1980's when the Government launched a campaign highlighting Kim Jong Il's "benevolent politics." Although the government-sponsored religious groups that were established at that time continue to operate and visits by foreign religious figures have increased, the regime appears to have cracked down on unauthorized religious groups in recent years. In particular, religious persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China appear to have been arrested and subjected to harsh penalties, according to several unconfirmed reports. The interKorean summit in mid-June 2000 has led to an increase in contacts with the Republic of Korea; its impact on the religious freedom situation remains unclear.

The U.S. Government does not have diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and information about the situation for religious freedom in the country is limited.

"The United States does not have diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. North Korea does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other invited visitors the freedom of movement that would enable them to fully assess human rights conditions there. This report is based on information obtained over more than a decade, updated where possible by information drawn from recent interviews, reports, and other documentation. While limited in detail, this information is nonetheless indicative of the religious freedom situation in North Korea today.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief;" however, in practice the Government discourages organized religious activity except that which is supervised by officially recognized groups. Genuine religious freedom does not exist. The Constitution also stipulates that religion "should not be used for purposes of dragging in foreign powers or endangering public security."

During and immediately after the Korean War, large numbers of religiously active persons were branded as "counterrevolutionaries," and many of them were executed or sent to concentration camps. The peak of this oppression was in the early 1970's when a constitutional revision added a clause about "freedom of anti-religious activity." The DPRK began to moderate its religious discrimination policies in the late 1980's, when it launched a campaign highlighting North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's "benevolent politics." As part of this campaign, the regime eased the system it instituted after a period of factional strife in the 1950's of classifying the population into dozens of rigidly defined categories according to family background and loyalty to the regime, and allowed the formation of several government-sponsored religious organizations. These serve as interlocutors with foreign church groups and international aid organizations. Foreigners who have met with representatives of these organizations believe that some are genuinely religious but note that others appear to know little about religious dogma or teaching.

A constitutional change in 1992 deleted the clause about freedom of anti-religious propaganda, authorized religious gatherings, and provided for "the right to build buildings for religious use."

*Religious Demography*

The number of religious believers is unknown but has been estimated at 10,000 Protestants, 10,000 Buddhists, and 4,000 Catholics. In addition, the Chondogyo Young Friends Party, a government-sponsored group based on a traditional Korean religious movement, is still in existence. There has been a limited revival of Buddhism with the translation and publication of Buddhist scriptures that had been

carved on 80,000 wooden blocks and kept at an historic temple. In the late 1980's, the Government sent two novice priests to study religion in Rome. However, the two returned before being ordained, so it still is not known whether any Catholic priests, whose role is a fundamental element for the practice of the Catholic faith, remain in the country. Seoul Archbishop Nicholas Jin-Suk Cheong, appointed by the Pope as Apostolic Administrator of Pyongyang, was quoted in July 2000 as stating that while there were 50 priests in the country in the 1940's, it is not known if they are still alive today. A visit to the DPRK by the Archbishop and Cardinal Stephen Souhwan Kim in mid-May 2000 was postponed because of the inter-Korean summit but reportedly is to be rescheduled.

There are 300 Buddhist temples. Most of the temples are regarded as cultural relics, but in some of them religious activity is permitted. Two Protestant churches under lay leadership and a Roman Catholic church (without a priest) have been opened since 1988 in Pyongyang. One of the Protestant churches is dedicated to the memory of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's mother, Kang Pan Sok, who was a Presbyterian deacon. Several foreigners resident in Pyongyang attend Korean services at these churches on a regular basis. Although some foreigners who have visited the DPRK over the years say that church activity appears staged, others believe that church services are genuine, although sermons contain both religious and political content supportive of the regime. The Government claims, and visitors confirm, that there are more than 500 authorized "house churches." Hundreds of religious figures have visited the DPRK in recent years, including papal representatives, the Reverend Billy Graham, and religious delegations from the Republic of Korea, the United States, and other countries. Overseas religious relief organizations also have been active in responding to the country's food crisis. An overseas Buddhist group has been operating a factory in the Najin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone since 1998 to produce food for preschool children.

Several schools for religious education exist. There are 3-year religious colleges for training Protestant and Buddhist clergy. A religious studies program also was established at Kim Il Sung University in 1989; its graduates usually go on to work in the foreign trade sector.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Persons engaging in religious proselytizing may be arrested and are subject to harsh penalties, including imprisonment and prolonged detention without charge. The Government appears concerned about religiously based South Korean relief and refugee assistance efforts along the northeast border with the People's Republic of China becoming entwined with more political goals, including overthrow of the regime. The food crisis apparently has heightened government concern about antiregime activity. An article in the Korean Workers Party newspaper in 1999 criticized "imperialists and reactionaries" for trying to use ideological and cultural infiltration, including religion, to destroy socialism from within. South Korean law requires all parties, including religious groups, travelling to North Korea or contacting North Koreans to request permission from the South Korean security agency. This requirement increases suspicions among North Korean officials about the intentions of such groups.

Little is known about the actual life of religious persons in the DPRK. Members of government-recognized religious groups do not appear to suffer discrimination; in fact, some reports claim they have been mobilized by the regime. Persons whose parents were believers but who themselves are nonpracticing are able to rise to at least the midlevels of the bureaucracy, despite their family background. Such individuals, as a category, suffered broad discrimination in the past. Members of underground churches connected to border missionary activity appear to be regarded as subversive elements.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government deals harshly with all opponents, including those engaging in religious practices deemed unacceptable to the regime. In April 1999, witnesses testified before the U.S. Congress on the treatment of persons held in prison camps through the early 1990's. The witnesses stated that prisoners held on the basis of their religious beliefs generally were treated worse than other inmates were. One witness, a former prison guard, testified that those believing in God were regarded as insane, as the authorities taught that "all religions are opium." He recounted an instance in which a woman was kicked repeatedly and left with her injuries unattended for days because a guard overheard her praying for a child who was being beaten. Because of the effectiveness of the Government in barring outside observers, such allegations could not be substantiated.



Religious and human rights groups outside the country have provided numerous, unconfirmed reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, or killed because of their religious beliefs. One unconfirmed report stated that a dozen Christians were executed during the period covered by this report. According to another unconfirmed report, 23 Christians were executed between October 1999 and April 2000; some reportedly were executed under falsified criminal charges, and some reportedly were tortured prior to their executions. A religious nongovernmental organization quoted an unnamed South Korean pastor's claims that 400 Christians were executed in 1999. These reports could not be confirmed or disproved because of the effectiveness of the Government in barring outside observers.

Nonetheless, the collective weight of anecdotal evidence of harsh treatment of unauthorized religious activity lends credence to such reports. The regime deals harshly with its critics, and views religious believers belonging to underground congregations or with ties to evangelical groups in North China as opponents. Reports of executions, torture, and imprisonment of religious persons in the country continue to emerge.

There is no reliable information on the number of religious detainees or prisoners, but there have been unconfirmed reports that some of those detained in the country are detained because of their religion.

It appears that there was no verifiable change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. There was some easing of religious discrimination policies in the late 1980's, and several government-sponsored religious groups established at that time continue to operate. The regime appears to have cracked down on unauthorized religious groups in recent years, especially persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China. There were several unconfirmed reports of executions of such persons. The interKorean summit in mid-June 2000 has led to an increase in contacts with the Republic of Korea; its impact on the religious situation remains unclear.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There was no information available on societal attitudes toward religious freedom. The regime does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other invited guests the freedom of movement that would enable them to assess fully religious freedom in the country. The Unification Church, which has business ventures in the country, currently is constructing an inter-faith religious facility in Pyongyang.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States does not have diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and has no official presence there. The DPRK is a closed society, and is extremely averse and resistant to outside influences. U.S. policy allows U.S. citizens to travel to the country and a number of churches and religious groups have organized efforts to alleviate suffering caused by shortages of food and medicine.

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## REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promotion of human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There is no state religion, and the Government does not subsidize or favor a particular religion.

There are no government-established requirements for religious recognition. To protect cultural properties such as Buddhist temples, the Government established the Traditional Temples Preservation Law. In accordance with this law, Buddhist temples receive some subsidies from the Government for their preservation and upkeep.

The Religious Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism takes the lead in organizing groups such as the Korea Religious Council and the Council for Peaceful Religions to promote inter-faith dialog and understanding. The Bureau also is responsible for planning regular events such as the Religion and Art Festival, the Seminar for Religious Leaders, and the Symposium for Religious Newspapers and Journalists.

*Religious Demography*

According to a 1995 government survey, the country's major religions and the number of adherents of each are: Buddhism—10,321,012; Protestantism—8,760,336; Roman Catholicism—2,950,730; Confucianism—210,927; Won Buddhism—86,923; and other religions—267,996. There were 21,593,000 atheists or non-practitioners.

Among those practicing a faith, 41.7 percent said that they attend religious services or rituals at a temple or church at least once a week. Six percent responded that they attend religious services two to three times a month; 9.4 percent attend once a month; 6.8 percent attend once every 2 to 3 months; 26.9 percent attend once a year; and 9.2 percent do not attend any services.

Among practicing Buddhists, 1.2 percent responded that they attend religious services. A total of 71.5 percent of Protestants and 60.4 percent of Catholics responded that they attend religious services.

Buddhism has approximately 38 orders, such as the "Korea Buddhist Kwaneum Order." The Catholic Church has 15 dioceses, including Seoul. There are 83 Protestant denominations, including the Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and Presbyterian denominations, the Anglican Church, and the Korean Gospel Church Assembly.

Although no official figures for the number of adherents are available, there are also several minority religions, such as the Elijah Evangelical Church, the Jesus Morning Star Church, and the All People's Holiness Church. Muslims, members of the Unification Church, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses are also present.

There are 17 Protestant and 6 Catholic missionary groups operating in the country. Among the Protestant groups are: Christians in Action, Korea; the Church of the Nazarene, Korea Mission; the Overseas Mission Fellowship; and World Opportunities International, Korea Branch. Among the Catholic missionary groups are the Missionaries of Guadalupe, the Prado Sisters, and the Little Brothers of Jesus. In accordance with the March 1, 1999 change in the Immigration Control Law, foreign missionary groups no longer are required to register with the Government. There were no reports of foreign missionaries being arrested or detained for their missionary activities.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

In August 1998, Catholic priest Moon Kyu Hyun was arrested on charges of violating the National Security Law after returning from North Korea, where he allegedly wrote in praise of Kim IlSung in a North Korean visitor's book and participated in a North Korean-sponsored reunification festival in Panmunjom. The eight other priests who traveled with him were not arrested, and Father Moon's arrest apparently was not based on his religious beliefs. Moon was released on bail in October 1998; as of late 1999 his trial was still underway.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between religious groups are generally amicable and free of incident, and religious tolerance is widespread. There have been press reports of so-called

“Protestant fanatics” damaging Buddhist temples and artifacts through vandalism and arson. Such reports generate calls for religious tolerance and mutual respect in the media and among the general public. However, such incidents are rare, and religious leaders regularly meet both privately and under the aegis of the Government to promote mutual understanding and tolerance. These meetings are given wide and favorable coverage by the media. Violence in October 1999 at the Chogye-sa Temple between Buddhist groups resulted from a leadership struggle rather than from religious motives.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officials also meet regularly with members of various religious communities to discuss issues related to human rights.

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## LAOS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. Some government officials committed abuses of citizens’ religious freedom.

The Government’s already poor record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated in some aspects during the period covered by this report.

The Government sought greater and more uniform regulation of the activities of religious organizations. Although some officials of the central government occasionally attempted to restrain antireligious activities by local officials, such problems continued. Largely due to the actions of a few party cadres in a few provinces, renunciation campaigns, harassment, and detentions increased at the end of 1999, but slackened by mid-2000. Official mistrust of “foreign” religions and ethnic tensions contributed to the deteriorating conditions for religious freedom.

U.S. Embassy representatives remained in contact with religious leaders. They discussed the need for greater religious freedom at working levels in the central Government. The Charge pressed the governor of Luang Prabang province to facilitate greater religious freedom there. The U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom visited the country twice during the period covered by this report. He urged the Government to respect citizens’ rights to religious freedom.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. The Constitution prohibits “all acts of creating division of religion or creating division among the people.” The Lao Peoples Revolutionary Party (LPRP) and Government appear to interpret this constitutional provision narrowly, thus inhibiting religious practice by all persons including the Buddhist majority and a large population of animists. Although official pronouncements accept the existence of religion, they emphasize its potential to divide, distract, or destabilize.

The Constitution notes that the State “mobilizes and encourages” monks, novices, and priests of other religions to participate in activities “beneficial to the nation and the people.” The Department of Religious Affairs in the Lao Front for National Construction (formerly known as the Lao National Front for Reconstruction), an LPRP mass organization, is responsible for overseeing all religions. Although the Government does not require registration, all functioning religious groups report to the Department of Religious Affairs quarterly. Reports of activities effectively constitute a system of approval; the approval process for new facilities is bureaucratic and time consuming.

The Department of Religious Affairs reportedly drafted regulations for religious organizations in late 1999, but took no further action. It held no public consultations with religious leaders on the new guidelines during the period covered by this report.

Although the State is secular in both name and practice, members of the LPRP and governmental institutions pay close attention to Theravada Buddhism, which is practiced by more than 60 percent of the population. The Government’s observation, control of clergy, training support (including Marxist-Leninist training for monks), and oversight of temples and other facilities constitutes less a form of favoritism than a means to supervise and limit religious freedoms among the dominant Buddhist faith. Many persons regard Buddhism as both an integral part of the na-

tional culture and a way of life. In 1999 the National Assembly formally raised the possibility of a constitutional amendment to make Buddhism the state religion. However, no action was taken on this matter, after the National Assembly leadership indicated that a national consultation would be held before any proposed constitutional amendments would be considered.

#### *Religious Demography*

Estimates of the number of persons who practice various faiths rank Theravada Buddhism first, with from 60 to 65 percent of the population, especially among lowland Lao. Many believers in animism—an estimated 30 percent of the population—are found among Lao Theung (mid-slope dwelling) and Lao Soung (highland) minority tribes. Among lowland Lao, particularly in the countryside, there is both a certain syncretistic practice of, and tolerance for, animist customs among those who devote themselves to Buddhist beliefs and rituals. Christians, including Roman Catholics, constitute at most 1.5 percent of the population. Other minority religions include the Baha'i Faith, Islam, Mahayana Buddhism, and Confucianism. A very small number of citizens follow no religion.

In Vientiane there are five Mahayana Buddhist pagodas, two serving the Lao-Vietnamese community and three the Lao-Chinese community. Buddhist monks from Vietnam, China, and India have visited these pagodas freely to conduct services and minister to worshipers. There are at least four more large Mahayana Buddhist pagodas in other urban centers. There are also unconfirmed reports of other, smaller Mahayana pagodas in villages near the borders of Vietnam and China. A few of the pagodas are served by Buddhist nuns. Whether a monk could reside permanently in any of these pagodas is unknown; the key determinant appears to be the expense for the congregation. One Mahayana pagoda in Pakse has at least one monk from Vietnam in residence at all times.

The Catholic Church has a following of 30,000 to 40,000 adherents. It is unable to operate effectively in the highlands and much of the north. However, it has an established presence in five of the most populous central and southern provinces, where Catholics are able to worship openly. There are three bishops, located in Vientiane, Thakhek, and Pakse, who visited Rome in late 1998, where they were able to confer with other bishops and the Pope. Although the Government does not recognize the Vatican, the Papal Nuncio visits from Bangkok, Thailand and coordinates with the Government on assistance programs, especially for lepers and the disabled. A Catholic seminary opened in Thakhek in early 1998 and is expected to train enough priests to serve the Catholic Community. As of June 2000, the status of the Catholic Church in Luang Prabang town continued to be in doubt; there appears to be a congregation there but, due to local obstructions, worship may not be conducted readily. However, Catholics are now able to practice more openly in neighboring Sayabouly province, and a priest visits the Luang Prabang diocese regularly.

Over 250 Protestant congregations conducted services throughout the country for a Protestant community numbering from 30,000 to 40,000 persons. The Lao National Front has recognized two Protestant groups, the Lao Evangelical Church, the umbrella Protestant church, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The Front strongly encourages all other Protestant groups to become a part of the Lao Evangelical Church. The Government has granted permission to four Protestant congregations from the approved denominations to have church buildings in the Vientiane area. In addition the Lao Evangelical Church has church buildings in Savannakhet and Pakse.

There are two active mosques in Vientiane that minister to the Sunni and Shafie branches of Islam. All persons in the 400strong Islamic community—the vast majority of whom are foreign permanent residents—appear to practice their faith openly, freely attending either mosque. Daily prayers and the weekly Jumaat prayer on Fridays proceed unobstructed and all Islamic celebrations are allowed. Citizens who are Muslims are able to go on the hajj. Groups that conduct Tabligh teachings for the faithful come from Thailand once or twice per year. A former mosque in Sayabouly province closed in the early 1990's due to the lack of an active Islamic community, since most Muslims in the province had moved to Vientiane.

The Baha'i Faith has more than 1,200 adherents and four centers: Two in Vientiane municipality, one in Vientiane province, and one in Pakse. Local spiritual assemblies and the national spiritual assembly routinely hold Baha'i 19-day feasts and celebrate all holy days. The National Spiritual Assembly meets regularly and is free to send a delegation to the Universal House of Justice in Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel.

There were unconfirmed reports that small groups of followers of Confucianism and Taoism practice their beliefs in the larger cities.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Party controls the Buddhist clergy (Sangha) in an attempt to direct national culture. After 1975 the Government attempted to “reform” Buddhism and ceased to consider it the state religion, causing thousands of monks to flee abroad, where most still remain. The Government has only one semireligious holiday, Boun That Luang, which is also a major political and cultural celebration. However, the Government recognizes the popularity and cultural significance of Buddhist festivals, and many senior officials openly attend them. Buddhist clergy are featured prominently at important state and party functions. The Lao National Front directs the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Association, which adopted a new charter in April 1998. The Front continues to require monks to study Marxism-Leninism, to attend certain party meetings, and to combine the party-state policies with their teachings of Buddhism. In recent years, some individual temples have been able to receive support from Theravada Buddhist temples abroad, to expand the training of monks, and to focus more on traditional teachings.

The Government’s tolerance of religion varied by region. In general central government authorities appeared unable to control or mitigate harsh measures that were taken by some local or provincial authorities against the practices of members of minority religious denominations. Although there was almost complete freedom to worship among unregistered groups in a few areas, particularly in the largest cities, government authorities in many regions allowed properly registered religious groups to practice their faith only under circumscribed conditions.

Although authorities tolerate diverse religious practices in the southern panhandle, a pattern of petty local harassment persists. Many converts must run a gauntlet of harsh government interviews; however, after overcoming that initial barrier, they are permitted to practice their new faith unhindered.

The authorities continue to remain suspicious of parts of the religious community other than Buddhism, including some Christian groups, in part because these faiths do not share a similar high degree of direction and incorporation into the government structure, as is the case with Theravada Buddhism. Authorities especially appear to suspect those religious groups that gain support from foreign sources, that aggressively proselytize among the poor or uneducated, or that give targeted assistance to converts. The Government permits major religious festivals of all established congregations without hindrance.

The Government prohibits foreigners from proselytizing, although it permits foreign nongovernmental organizations with religious affiliations to work in the country. Although there is no prohibition against proselytizing by citizens, there has been increased local government investigation and harassment of citizens who do so under the constitutional provision against creating division of religion.

The Government does not permit the printing of religious texts or their distribution outside a congregation and restricts the import of foreign religious texts and artifacts. However, in practice all approved congregations are able to supply texts to the faithful and decorate their places of worship. The Government requires and routinely grants permission for formal links with coreligionists in other countries. However, in practice the line between formal and informal links is blurred, and relations generally are established without much difficulty.

Recognized, organized religious groups appeared to grow in size but to derive only minimal benefit from increased personal freedoms in economic activity, travel, and availability of media. While the Government continued to prohibit proselytizing by foreigners, Lao Christian proselytizers were active in some areas, resulting in some new conversions. However, the Government’s response to evangelizing was strong and tended to restrict this activity. These conflicting trends—maintaining limited freedoms among established groups, alongside a clash between small bands of highly active proselytizers and some government hard-liners—tended to contribute to an overall atmosphere that was not conducive to change, particularly in the easing of existing government restrictions.

Some minority religious groups reported that they were unable during the period covered by this report to register new congregations or receive permission to establish new places of worship, including places in Vientiane. Authorities sometimes advised new denominations to join other religious groups having similar historical antecedents, despite clear differences between the groups’ beliefs. Some groups did not submit applications for establishment of places of worship because they did not believe that their applications would be approved.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In areas such as Luang Prabang, Houaphanh, Savannakhet, Oudomxay, Phongsaly, and Attapeu, the authorities arrested and detained religious believers and their spiritual leaders without charge. In Luang Prabang, three evangelical

Christians were sentenced on November 26, 1999 to 5 years' imprisonment under Article 66 of the Penal Code for gathering to create social turmoil. Each of the three was a well-known Christian spiritual leader. In an appeal that the three submitted jointly to the national appellate court on February 25, the defendants stated that two were in the house of the third only to stop by while waiting for the return of a neighbor, that they had private business with the neighbor, and that they did not see the third defendant, let alone meet with him.

In more isolated cases, provincial authorities instructed their officials to monitor and arrest persons who professed belief in Christianity, Islam, or the Baha'i Faith. For example, there is clear evidence that in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet provinces the authorities continued to force hundreds of Christians to sign renunciations of their faith. Some civil servants were threatened with loss of their positions if they did not sign the renunciations. Citizens in Luang Prabang since 1999 reported that authorities ordered them to stop completely their Christian activities, under threat of arrest. The order appeared to apply only to new converts; believers of long standing were allowed to continue their beliefs but not to conduct worship or openly practice their faith. Despite general inaction by officials on their threats, such threats have had a chilling effect on religious practice in these provinces. The overwhelming preponderance of arrests in the country have been of religious leaders and the most active and visible proselytizers, not of practitioners. For example, in a southern province in 1998, police refused to release a Lao Christian who was arrested for proselytizing until the detainee pledged not to proselytize again.

In Savannakhet province, district authorities supported by police, military, and representatives of the National Front, closed Christian churches in at least three districts in the latter part of 1999. Most of the churches closed had been built in the past 10 years. Churches of longer standing remained open, and most practitioners who found that their churches had been closed were able to move their activities to these places of worship. In a few villages in which churches had been closed in late 1999, security forces set up roadblocks during Sunday worship hours that prevented villagers from traveling to other places to conduct worship services. Although the closed churches were not reopened, physical obstruction of church attendance appeared to have abated by mid-2000.

Members of long-established congregations have few problems in practicing their faith; however, in the second half of 1999 some churches established a century ago were subjected to harassment by local government officials in Savannakhet. Many groups of coreligionists seeking to assemble in a new location are thwarted in attempts to meet, practice, or celebrate major religious festivals.

Authorities continued to arrest persons for their religious activities. With new arrests in Houaphanh and Phongsaly provinces at the end of 1999 and in early 2000, an estimated 55 to 60 members of religious minorities were in detention at one time. This number decreased with releases in 2000 in Houaphanh and Phongsaly and a release of 16 detainees in Savannakhet in June 2000. However, another 11 persons were arrested in Luang Prabang in March 2000 but then released within a few weeks. In total about 100 persons were arrested and detained at least briefly for their religious activities during the period covered by this report.

In rare cases, some local authorities harassed citizens who traveled outside the country for short-term religious training on the grounds that these persons had not provided their full travel plans to the authorities prior to departing from the country. At least five such persons were detained for this reason in early 1999. This restriction on freedom of movement appeared to affect primarily those who applied for crossborder passes into Thailand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the power to grant exit visas and usually grants them as a matter of routine. There is no evidence that the central Government investigated travelers on their return.

The enhanced status given to Buddhism in Luang Prabang—famed for its centuries-old Buddhist tradition and numerous temples—apparently led some local officials there to act more harshly toward minority religions, particularly toward Christian and Baha'i groups, than in other areas of the country.

As of June 30, there were 5 known convicted religious prisoners and an estimated 20 religious detainees. They were detained in the following locations: Savannakhet, 2; Attapeu, 10; Houaphanh, 2; Oudomxay, 4; Luang Prabang, 3; Phongsaly, 2; and Vientiane, 2. In Luang Prabang, three persons were tried and convicted; in Savannakhet, two persons were tried and convicted.

A few of the religious detainees are singled out for special treatment: They must wear chains on their legs or fixed manacles on their wrists. One detainee was in solitary confinement for a period of 3 to 4 weeks; others had one foot placed in a fixed stock.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Because society places a high premium on harmonious relations, and because the dominant Buddhist faith is generally tolerant of other religious practices, the various religious communities coexist amicably. Although there is no ecumenical movement, and there are no efforts to create greater mutual understanding, cultural mores generally instill respect for longstanding, wellknown differences in belief. However, the Government is considerably less tolerant of newly introduced religions, especially "foreign" religions introduced among ethnic groups. Some evidence suggests that the Government makes little effort to ameliorate existing societal discrimination against ethnic minorities when that social tension can be used to restrict religious activities.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed religious freedom issues included in this report with the Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The Charge has raised high profile cases with high-ranking MFA officials and relevant provincial governors. In addition the Embassy has an ongoing dialog with the Department of Religious Affairs in the Lao National Front and with other high ranking officials in the National Front.

Embassy representatives have met with all religious leaders in the country. Embassy officials have actively encouraged religious freedom despite an environment that is restricted by the government-owned and government-controlled media.

U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Robert A. Seiple visited the country in July 1999 and in January 2000. Seiple met with high ranking officials in ministries and offices concerned with the administration of religious affairs. He also visited places of worship and met with religious leaders, including the supreme patriarch of the Buddhist hierarchy. During his second visit, Ambassador Seiple sat at a first-ever group meeting of religious leaders and officials, where he raised religious freedom as a topic for discussion. Although government officials' presence did not encourage frank dialog, the meeting was unprecedented. Ambassador Seiple stressed to government officials the importance of honoring the universally recognized right to freedom of religion. Underlining Ambassador Seiple's public diplomacy mission, the Embassy ensured wide press coverage of the visit by national media, which stated explicitly his intent to discuss the U.S. International Religious Freedom Act.

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**MALAYSIA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government places some restrictions on this right. Islam is the official religion; however, the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The country's various believers generally live amicably.

Religious minorities generally worship freely although with some restrictions. The Government enforces some restrictions on the establishment of non-Muslim places of worship and on the activities of political opponents in mosques.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government places some restrictions on this right. Islam is the official religion; however, the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly. Religious minorities include Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Sikh communities. Government funds support an Islamic religious establishment (the Government also grants limited funds to nonIslamic religious communities), and it is official policy to "infuse Islamic values" into the administration of the country. The Government imposes Is-

lamic religious law on Muslims only in some matters and does not impose Islamic law beyond the Muslim community. Adherence to Islam is considered intrinsic to Malay ethnic identity, and therefore Islamic religious laws bind ethnic Malays.

#### *Religious Demography*

According to government census figures, in 1991 59 percent of the population were Muslim; 18 percent practiced Buddhism; 8 percent Christianity; 6 percent Hinduism; 5 percent Confucianism, Taoism, or other religions that originated in China; 1 percent animism; and 0.5 percent other faiths, including Sikhism and the Baha'i Faith. Estimates of the religious practices of the remainder were not stated.

Non-Muslims are concentrated in East Malaysia, major urban centers, and other areas.

In February 2000, the opposition-controlled state of Kelantan announced plans to form an Inter-religious Council.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

For Muslims, particularly ethnic Malays, the right to leave the Islamic faith and adhere to another religion is a controversial question, and in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change religions. Persons who wish to do so face severe obstacles. The legal process of conversion is unclear; in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change their religion legally. In March 1999, the country's highest court ruled that secular courts have no jurisdiction to hear applications by Muslims to change religions. According to the ruling, the religious conversion of Muslims is solely the jurisdiction of Islamic courts. If the High Court continues to affirm this ruling in future cases, it would make conversion of Muslims nearly impossible in practice.

The issue of Muslim apostasy is very sensitive. In 1998 after a controversial incident of attempted conversion, the Government stated that apostates (i.e., Muslims who wish to leave or have left Islam for another religion) would not face government punishment as long as they did not defame Islam after their conversion. The Government opposes what it considers deviant interpretations of Islam, maintaining that the "deviant" groups' extreme views endanger national security. In the past, the Government imposed restrictions on certain Islamic schools, primarily the small number of Shi'a. The Government continues to monitor the activities of the Shi'a minority, and the Government periodically detained members of what it considers Islamic "deviant sects" without trial or charge under the Internal Security Act (ISA) during the period covered by this report. In April 2000, the state of Perlis passed a Shari'a law subjecting Islamic "deviants" and apostates to 1 year of "rehabilitation." In early 2000, other states were reportedly considering similar Shari'a laws. (Under the Constitution, religion, including Shari'a law, is a state matter.) However, there were no reports of arrests for apostasy.

In June 2000, the Government announced that all Muslim civil servants must attend religious classes, but only Islamic classes would be held. In addition only teachers approved by the Government would be employed.

The Government generally respects non-Muslims' right of worship; however, state governments carefully control the building of non-Muslim places of worship and the allocation of land for non-Muslim cemeteries. Approvals for such permits sometimes are granted very slowly. After a violent conflict in Penang between Hindus and Muslims in March 1998, the Government announced a nationwide review of unlicensed Hindu temples and shrines. However, implementation was not vigorous, and the program is no longer a subject of public debate.

In July 1999, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism (MCCBCHS), a nongovernmental organization representing minority religions, protested the planned implementation of Ministry of Housing and Local Government guidelines governing new non-Muslim places of worship. The MCCBCHS specifically complained that the guidelines required an area to have at least 2,000 adherents to a particular non-Muslim faith for a new non-Muslim place of worship to be approved (no such requirement exists for Muslim places of worship). The group also complained that, under the guidelines, the State Islamic Council must approve the establishment of all non-Muslim places of worship. In September 1999, the Government agreed to revise the proposed guidelines. By mid-2000, the guidelines still had not been implemented, and there were no reports on the status of the revisions.

Proselytizing of Muslims by members of other religions is prohibited strictly, although proselytizing of non-Muslims faces no obstacles. The Government discourages—and in practical terms forbids—the circulation in peninsular Malaysia of Malay-language translations of the Bible and distribution of Christian tapes and printed materials in Malay. However, Malay-language Christian materials are available. Some states have laws that prohibit the use of Malay-language religious terms



by Christians, but the authorities do not enforce them actively. The distribution of Malay-language Christian materials faces few restrictions in East Malaysia. Visas for foreign Christian clergy are restricted severely.

For Muslim children, religious education according to a government-approved curriculum is compulsory. There are no restrictions on home instruction.

The Government generally restricts remarks or publications that might incite racial or religious disharmony. This includes some statements and publications critical of particular religions, especially Islam. The Government also restricts the content of sermons at mosques.

After the November 1999 national elections, the Government significantly expanded efforts to restrict the activities of the Islamic opposition party at mosques. Several states announced measures including banning opposition-affiliated imams from speaking at mosques, more vigorously enforcing existing restrictions on the content of sermons, replacing mosque leaders and governing committees thought to be sympathetic to the opposition, and threatening to close down unauthorized mosques with ties to the opposition. The Government justified such measures as necessary to oppose the "politicization of religion" by the opposition.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners during the period covered by this report.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covering by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country's various believers generally live amicably.

The Government has a comprehensive system of preferences in housing, education, business, and other areas for Bumiputras, ethnic Malay Muslims, and a few other groups that practice various religions.

Ecumenical and inter-faith organizations of the non-Muslim religions exist and include the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism, the Malaysian Council of Churches, and the Christian Federation of Malaysia. Muslim organizations generally do not participate in ecumenical bodies.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives have met with some religious leaders.

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## MARSHALL ISLANDS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religious communities in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

#### *Religious Demography*

Major religions include the United Church of Christ (formerly—Congregational) with 54.8 percent of the population; the Assembly of God with 25.8 percent; and the Roman Catholic Church with 8.4 percent. Also represented are Bukot Nan Jesus (also known as Assembly of God Part Two) with 2.8 percent; the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints with 2.1 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists with 0.9

percent; Full Gospel with 0.7 percent; and Baha'i Faith with 0.6 percent. Persons without any religious affiliation account for 1.5 percent of the population, and another 1.4 percent belong to religions not named by the census.

There are missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Seventh-Day Adventists. Religious schools include the Assumption Catholic School and the Rita Christian School as well as facilities operated by the United Church of Christ and the Assembly of God.

The Government takes no active steps to promote inter-faith understanding, and it does not intervene in inter-faith discussion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although Christianity is a dominant social and cultural force, there are amicable relations between the country's religious denominations. Nonbelievers, who constitute a very small percentage of the residents, do not suffer discrimination. Typically, governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister, cleric, or church official.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Bill of Rights forbids establishment of a state religion and governmental restrictions on freedom of religion.

#### *Religious Demography*

Most Protestant denominations as well as the Roman Catholic Church are present on the four major islands of the country. The most prevalent Protestant denomination is the United Church of Christ. Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon), and adherents of the Baha'i Faith are also represented. On Kosrae 99 percent of the population are members of the United Church of Christ; on Pohnpei approximately 50 percent of the population are Protestant and 50 percent are Catholic; on Chuuk and Yap, approximately 60 percent are Catholic and 40 percent are Protestant. There is a small group of Buddhists on Pohnpei.

On the island of Pohnpei, clan divisions mark religious boundaries in some measure. More Protestants live on the western side of the island, but more Catholics live on the eastern side.

Missionaries of many faiths work within the nation. Seventh-Day Adventists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and other foreign missionary groups operate without hindrance on all four islands.

Most immigrants are from the Philippines; most of these are Catholics and join local Catholic churches.

There is no government-sponsored ecumenical activity.  
 There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.  
 There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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# MONGOLIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, proselytizing is limited by forbidding the use of incentives, pressure, or deceptive methods.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable. However, some conservative elements of society resent foreign interference in the form of religion. Government limits on proselytizing and bureaucratic harassment of groups that seek to register hinder the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion, the right both to worship and not to worship, and the Government generally respects these provisions in practice; however, the law limits proselytizing, and some groups that sought to register have faced bureaucratic harassment. The Constitution explicitly recognizes the separation of church and state. The law regulating the relationship between church and state was passed in 1993 and amended in 1995. While the Ministry of Justice is responsible for registrations, local assemblies have the authority to approve applications at the local level.

Although there is no official state religion, traditionalists believe that Buddhism is the "natural religion" of the country. The Government has contributed to the restoration of several Buddhist sites. These are important religious, historical, and cultural centers. The Government does not subsidize the Buddhist religion otherwise.

Under the provisions of the law, the Government may supervise and limit the numbers of both places of worship and clergy for organized religions, but there were no reports that it has done so. However, religious groups must register with the Ministry of Justice. Some groups encountered harassment during the registration process, including random demands by mid-level city officials for financial contributions in return for securing legal status. Even when registration was completed, the same authorities threatened some religious groups with withdrawal of approval. The registration process is decentralized with several layers of bureaucracy, in which officials sometimes demand financial benefits in exchange for authorization. Additionally, registration in the capital may not be sufficient if a group intends to work in the countryside where local registration also is necessary. In general it appears that difficulties in registering primarily are the consequence of bureaucratic action by local officials and attempts to extort financial assistance for projects not funded by the city. Of the 260 temples and churches founded in the past 10 years, about 150 are registered, including 90 Buddhist, 40 Christian, and 4 Baha'i, in addition to 1 Muslim mosque and other organizations.

*Religious Demography*

Buddhism and Mongolian traditions are tied closely, and it appears likely that almost all ethnic Mongolians (93 percent of the population) practice some form of Buddhism. Lamaist Buddhism of the Tibetan variety is the traditional and dominant religion, but this circumstance does not adversely affect religious freedom for others. Since the end of Socialist controls on religion and Mongolian traditions in 1990, active interest in and practice of Buddhism has grown. The Buddhist community is not completely homogenous, and there are several competing schools, including a small group that believes that the sutras should be in the Mongolian language and that all religious clergy should be Mongolian. However, the rivalry between the schools has not affected religious freedom, nor is it a matter of public concern.

Kazakhs are the largest of the ethnic minorities, constituting approximately 4 percent of the population nationwide and 85 percent of the population of the western province, Bayan-Olgii. Most Kazakhs are practicing Muslims. The Kazakhs freely worship and run Islamic schools for their children. They sometimes receive financial assistance from religious organizations in Kazakhstan and Turkey. Their status as a majority in Bayan-Olgii was established in the former Socialist period and continues in much the same circumstances.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The law does not prohibit proselytizing, but limits it by forbidding use of incentives, pressure, or deceptive methods to introduce religion. With the opening of the country following the 1990 democratic changes, religious groups began to arrive to provide humanitarian assistance and open new churches. Some friction between missionary groups and citizens developed because this assistance was mixed with proselytizing activities. Proselytizing by registered religious groups is allowed, although a Ministry of Education directive bans mixing foreign language or other training with religious teaching or instruction. The edict is enforced, particularly in the capital area. Contacts with coreligionists outside the country are allowed.

Foreign missionaries include Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, various evangelical Protestant groups, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and adherents of the Baha'i Faith. Some of these groups are still in the process of registering with the Ministry of Justice; the process is protracted for some groups, but others are registered quickly. Religious groups are being granted the right to hold church services and have their own church buildings in addition to operating charitable institutions.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners. A report that in April 2000 a Christian in Bayan-Olgii (a predominantly Muslim province) was imprisoned for distributing religious material was determined to be false.

*Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable, but there are no significant ecumenical movements or inter-faith dialog. Citizens generally are tolerant of the beliefs of others, and there were no reports of religiously motivated violence, although there has been some friction between missionary groups and citizens because humanitarian assistance in the past was mixed with proselytizing activity (see Section I). Some conservatives have criticized foreign influences on youth and children, including religion and the use of incentives to attract believers.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials have discussed with mid-level bureaucrats specific registration difficulties encountered by Christian churches. These discussions focused attention on U.S. concern for religious freedom and opposition to corruption; they resulted in a clarification of the requirements for registration.

When draft amendments to the law that would have limited religious freedom were circulated by the Ministry of Justice in the fall of 1999, the Embassy made official demarches to the Government, informally discussed U.S. concerns with key legislators, and coordinated a response with other embassies and multilateral organizations. Subsequently the Government did not consider these amendments.

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with Buddhist leaders. Additionally, embassy officials have met with representatives of U.S.-based religious and humanitarian organizations. The Embassy also maintains contact with the staff of the local office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to discuss human rights and religious freedom.

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## NAURU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both Government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

#### *Religious Demography*

Christianity is the primary religion. Approximately two-thirds of the Christians are Protestants, and the remaining one-third are Roman Catholics. The population as a whole is 58 percent Nauruan, 26 percent other Pacific Islanders, 8 percent European, and 8 percent Chinese. Some of the latter group may be Buddhist or Taoist.

Christianity was introduced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Western missionaries. There are a few active Christian missionary organizations, including representatives of the Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic faiths.

The Government has not taken specific actions to improve inter-religious relations. However, it has set aside land for the renovation and construction of places of worship.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Inter-faith relations appear amicable.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Fiji visit periodically to discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. They also meet with leaders of religious communities and nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in religious freedom.

The U.S. Embassy actively supports efforts to improve and expand governmental and societal awareness of and protection for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion.

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## NEW ZEALAND

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

##### *Religious Demography*

The religious composition of the country is predominantly Christian but is becoming more diverse. According to the 1996 census, 60.6 percent of citizens identified themselves as Christian or as affiliated members of individual Christian denominations; less than 3 percent were affiliated with non-Christian religions.

The four major Christian denominations of Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist experienced a decline in membership between 1991 and 1996, with the proportion of the population affiliated with these denominations falling from 57.6 percent to 49.1 percent. Anglicans remained by far the largest Christian denomination, with 18 percent of the population in 1996. Pentecostals were the only major Christian group to experience significant growth (55 percent) during the same period. Among non-Christian religions, the number of Buddhists and Muslims more than doubled, while the number of Hindus increased by approximately 50 percent, although each of these groups still constitutes less than 1 percent of the population. The number of persons who indicated no religious affiliation also increased markedly between 1991 and 1996, rising by 33 percent to over one-fourth of the population. The indigenous Maori (approximately 15 percent of the population) are overwhelmingly members of Presbyterian, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Ratana, Ringatu, and other faiths.

According to 1996 census data, the following were the numbers and percentages of the population's religious affiliation: Anglican—631,764 (18.42 percent); Roman Catholic—473,112 (13.79 percent); Presbyterian—458,289 (13.36 percent); Methodist—121,650 (3.55 percent); Baptist—53,613 (1.56 percent); Mormons—41,166 (1.20 percent); Pentecostal—39,228 (1.14 percent); Ratana (a Maori/Christian group with services in the Maori language)—36,450 (1.06 percent); Buddhist—28,131 (0.82 percent); Hindu—25,293 (0.74 percent); Brethren—19,950 (0.58 percent); Jehovah's Witnesses—19,524 (0.57 percent); Assemblies of God—17,520 (0.51 percent); Salvation Army—14,625 (0.43 percent); Islam—13,548 (0.39 percent); Seventh-Day Adventist—12,324 (0.36 percent); Apostolic Church of New Zealand—8,913 (0.26 percent); Congregational—8,838 (0.26 percent); Ringatu (a Maori/Christian group with services in the Maori language)—8,268 (0.24 percent); Orthodox Christian—6,936 (0.20 percent); Spiritualist—5,097 (0.15 percent); Lutheran—5,007 (0.15 percent); Jewish—4,812 (0.14 percent); Churches of Christ—4,233 (0.12 percent); Reformed—3,288 (0.10 percent); Baha'i—3,111 (0.09 percent); Elim—3,018 (0.09 percent); Sikh—814 (0.08 percent); Protestant—2,778 (0.08 percent); Exclusive Brethren—1,986 (0.06 percent); Christadelphians—1,743 (0.05 percent); Uniting/Union Church—1,728 (0.05 percent); Evangelical—1,584 (0.05 percent); Religious Society of Friends—1,161 (0.03 percent); Satanist—909 (0.03 percent); Worldwide Church of God—624 (0.02 percent); Rastafarianism—582 (0.02 percent); Taoism—561 (0.02 percent); Nazarene—459 (0.01 percent); Hauhau—408 (0.01 percent); Christian Science—294 (0.01 percent); Revival Centres—273 (0.01 percent); Unitarian—267 (0.01 percent); Hare Krishna—258 (0.01 percent); Church of Scientology—216 (0.01 percent); Commonwealth Covenant Church—168 (less than 0.01 percent); Unification Church—135 (less than 0.01 percent); other Christian—188,670 (5.50 percent); other non-Christian—4,596 (0.13 percent); other response including no religion—893,910 (26.06 percent); object to statement—256,593 (7.48 percent); not specified—187,881 (5.50 percent); total—3,618,303 (100.00 percent).

The Auckland statistical area (which accounts for roughly 30 percent of the country's total population) exhibits the greatest religious diversity. Farther south on the North Island, and on the South Island, the percentage of citizens who identified themselves with Christian faiths increased while those affiliated with non-Christian religions decreased.

The Education Act of 1964 specifies in its "secular clause" that teaching within public primary schools "shall be entirely of a secular character." However, it also permits religious instruction and observances in state primary schools within certain parameters. If the school committee in consultation with the principal or head teacher so determines, any class may be closed at any time of the school day within specified limits for the purposes of religious instruction given by voluntary instructors. However, attendance at religious instruction or observances is not compulsory.

According to the Legal Division of the Ministry of Education, public secondary schools also may permit religious instruction at the discretion of their individual school boards. The Ministry of Education does not keep centralized data on how many individual primary or secondary schools permit religious instruction or observances, but a curriculum division spokesperson maintains that in practice religious instruction, if it occurs at a particular school, usually is scheduled after normal school hours.

Under the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975, the Government, in response to a burgeoning general primary school role and financial difficulties experienced by a large group of Catholic parochial schools, permitted the incorporation of private schools into the public school system. Designated as “integrated schools,” they were deemed to be of a “unique character” and permitted to receive public funding provided that they allowed space for nonpreference students. A total of 303 of the 2,784 primary schools are integrated schools with this designation. More than 250 of these 303 schools are Catholic; there are a handful of non-Christian or non-religious schools, such as Islamic, Hare Krishna, or Rudolph Steiner—a school of spiritual philosophy. Primary school students are not required to attend an integrated school.

Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Monday are official holidays. The small but growing non-Christian communities called for the Government to take into account the increasingly diverse religious makeup regarding holiday flexibility.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist among the various religious communities.

Incidents of religiously-motivated violence are extremely rare. Due to the infrequency of their occurrence and difficulties in clearly establishing such motivations, the police do not attempt to maintain data on crimes that may have been motivated by religion. However, in August 1998, arsonists burned the Islamic mosque in Hamilton. The mosque was later rebuilt, and Ramadan services were conducted there in 1999 and 2000 without incident.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## PALAU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religion freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government does not promote or restrain religious activities. However, the Government regulates the establishment of religious organizations by requiring them to obtain charters as nonprofit organizations from the office of the Attorney General. This registration process is not protracted, and no applicants have been denied during the period covered by the report. As nonprofit organizations, these churches and missions are tax exempt. There is government financial support for

religious schools; the Government also provides small scale financial assistance to cultural organizations.

#### *Religious Demography*

There are 15 Christian denominations. The Roman Catholic Church is the dominant religion and approximately 65 percent of the population of 18,000 are members. Other religions with a sizable membership include the Evangelical Church (with approximately 2,000 members), the Seventh-Day Adventists (with approximately 1,000), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (about 300), and Jehovah's Witnesses (about 70). Modekngei, which embraces both pagan and Christian beliefs and is unique to Palau, has about 800 adherents.

A large percentage of citizens do not practice their faith actively. However, the primarily Catholic Filipino labor force (approximately 3,100 persons) practices its faith actively. There is active participation by the majority of the country's religious groups in Easter and Christmas services. There is also a small group of Bangladeshi Muslims in the labor force who practice their faith actively. However, employers have complained to the Division of Labor under the Ministry of Commerce and Trade that the Muslims' religious practices interfere both with activity in the workplace and with the living arrangements of the employing families. As a consequence of these complaints, the Ministry of Commerce and Trade decided to deny work permits to Bangladeshi workers in the future. Current workers are not being expelled.

There are two religious groups with independent radio stations, the High Adventure Ministries and the Seventh-Day Adventists.

Since the arrival of Jesuit priests in the early 19th century, foreign missionaries successfully have converted the population to their various faiths. Some missionaries have been in the country for years and speak the language fluently. A number of groups (the Baha'i Faith, the Roman Catholic Church, the Chinese Agriculture Mission, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Evangelical Church, the High Adventure Ministries, the Iglesia ni Cristo, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Korean Church, the Korea Presbyterian Church, the Pacific Missionary Aviation, the Palau Assembly of God, and the Seventh-Day Adventists) have missionaries in the country on proselytizing or teaching assignments.

The Seventh-Day Adventist and the Evangelical Churches have missionaries teaching in their respective elementary and high schools. The Government does not permit religious instruction in the public schools.

There are no government sponsored ecumenical activities.

Although the Government does not affiliate with religious groups or promote religious activities, official ceremonies at the national or state level, such as public and private school graduations, always are conducted with a prayer to open and close the ceremonies.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. Most religious groups and activities are concentrated in the capital of Koror, where approximately 80 percent of the population lives.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.



Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The predominance of Christianity is recognized in the preamble of the Constitution, which refers to "our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours." Nevertheless, the Constitution's provisions for freedom of conscience, thought, and religion have consistently been interpreted to mean that any religion may be practiced or propagated as long as it does not interfere with the freedom of others. The population largely belongs to various Christian churches. Many Christian denominations and some non-Christian groups meet and preach freely in the country, and there is a high level of regular participation in group worship and religious activities. However, many citizens combine their Christian faith with some pre-Christian traditional indigenous practices.

##### *Religious Demography*

According to the 1990 census, the churches with the largest number of members are the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church, the Evangelical Alliance, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. At that time, 97 percent of citizens identified themselves as members of a Christian church. Less than 0.3 percent identified themselves as non-Christian, and less than 3 percent identified themselves as having no religion.

The mainstream churches are those that proselytized on the island of New Guinea in the 19th century. Initially, colonial governments assigned different missions to different geographic areas. Since territory in Papua New Guinea is synonymous with language group and ethnicity, this policy led to the identification of certain churches with certain ethnic groups. However, as the country's economy modernized and populations became more mobile, churches of all denominations moved with them, and churches of major denominations are now found in all parts of the country.

Nonmainstream Christian churches and non-Christian religious groups are active throughout the country as well. According to the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches, recently both Muslim and Confucian missionaries have become active.

Immigrants and noncitizens are free to practice their religion. The Muslim community has a mosque in the capital of Port Moresby. In general the Government does not subsidize the practice of religion. The Department of Family and Church Affairs has a nominal policymaking role that until recently has been confined to reiterating the Government's respect for church autonomy. In late 1999, a privately-sponsored bill was introduced in Parliament that proposed to replace the existing Council of Churches with a National Council of Christian Churches, the leadership of which would be appointed by the Minister for Family and Church Affairs and which would be funded by the Government. The churches did not support the bill, and it was not adopted.

However, most of the schools and many of the health services in the country were built and continue to be run by the churches, and the Government provides support for those institutions. At independence the Government recognized that it had neither the funds nor the human capital with which to take over these institutions and agreed to subsidize their operations on a per pupil/per patient basis. The Government also pays the salaries of national teachers and health staff. In recent years, although the education and health infrastructures continue to rely heavily on churchrun institutions, some have closed periodically because they did not receive the promised government support. These problems are due in part to endemic financial management problems in the Government.

It is the policy of the Department of Education to set aside 1 hour a week for religious instruction in the public schools. Church representatives teach the lessons, and the students attend the class run by the church of their choice. Children whose parents do not wish them to attend the classes are excused.

Foreign missionary activity is high. The Pentecostal Church particularly has made inroads into the congregations of the more established churches, but nearly every conceivable movement and faith that proselytizes has representatives in the country. The Summer Institute of Linguistics is an important missionary institution; it translates the New Testament into native languages.

The Roman Catholic Church is the only mainstream church that still relies to a large extent on foreign clergy.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities.

As new missionary movements proliferate, representatives of some established churches and some individuals have questioned publicly whether such activity is socially desirable. Some persons have proposed legislation to limit such activity. However, the courts and government practice have upheld the constitutional right to freedom of speech, thought, and belief, and no legislation to curb those rights has ever been adopted. For example, when the Muslim community applied to the Land Board for permission to acquire property on which to build a mosque, some churches objected, citing Papua New Guinea's historical character as a Christian country. Nevertheless, permission to acquire the land was granted.

The Papua New Guinea Council of Churches makes the only effort at inter-faith dialog. The Council members consist of the Anglican, Gutnius and Union Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran and United churches, and the Salvation Army. In addition, it has 15 para-religious organizations, like the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which participate in its activities. However, the Council has only Christian affiliates. The Council is self-financing. The ecumenical work of the Council of Churches is confined primarily to cooperation between churches on social welfare projects.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy engages the Government on a wide range of human rights issues, including religious freedom. The Ambassador continued discussions with the Council of Churches and individual church leaders throughout the period covered by this report. The Ambassador and the Embassy's consular officer visit regularly with U.S. citizen missionaries of all denominations.

## PHILIPPINES

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Adherents of all faiths are free to exercise their religious beliefs in all parts of the country without government interference or restriction. However, there is a socioeconomic disparity between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority. There is also some ethnic-cultural discrimination against Muslims. This has led some Muslims to seek—and the Government to grant—a degree of political autonomy to Muslims in the southwestern part of the country. The principal remaining armed insurgent Muslim group continued to seek greater autonomy or an independent Muslim state. Negotiations between the Government and this group are punctuated by violent clashes that have claimed many lives on both sides, including noncombatants. Militant Muslim splinter groups, which demand the immediate establishment of an Islamic state, have resorted to terrorism. Mainstream Muslim leaders strongly criticized these tactics.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy staff members have met with representatives of all major faiths to learn about their concerns on a variety of issues. In addition the U.S. Government supports the Government's peace process with Muslim insurgents in Mindanao, which has the potential to contribute to a better climate for inter-faith relations. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides training and economic assistance to former Muslim combatants who seek jobs and business opportunities, and support for their agricultural livelihood projects.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. Both national and other levels of government generally protect this right and do not tolerate its abuse, either by government or private institutions. Although Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism, is the dominant religion, there is no state religion. The Government does not restrict adherents of other religions from practicing their faith. The Government provides no direct subsidies to institutions for religious purposes, including aid to the extensive school systems maintained by religious orders and church groups.

Organized religions must register with the Securities and Exchange Commission as nonstock, nonprofit organizations, and with the Bureau of Internal Revenue to establish their taxexempt status. There were no reports of discrimination in the registration system during the period covered by this report.

The Office of Muslim affairs, funded through the Office of the President, generally limits its activities to fostering Islamic religious practices, although it also has the authority to coordinate projects for economic growth in predominantly Muslim areas. The office's Philippine Pilgrimage Authority helps coordinate the travel of religious pilgrimage groups to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, providing bus service to and from airports, hotel reservations, and guides. The Presidential Assistant for Muslim Affairs helps coordinate relations with countries that have large Islamic populations that have contributed to Mindanao's economic development and to the peace process with insurgent groups.

In 1996 the Government signed a peace agreement with the Islamic Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), concluding an often violent struggle that had lasted more than 20 years. The Government is working with the MNLF's leaders on a variety of development programs to reintegrate former MNLF fighters into the market economy through jobs and business opportunities. During the first half of 2000, government forces engaged in armed clashes with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the chief remaining armed separatist group. Peace talks were suspended in April 2000. The MILF continued its armed struggle for an independent Islamic state in Mindanao for the Bangsa Moro, who are Islamic citizens. Most Philippine Muslims do not support the MILF.

The Code of Muslim Personal Laws, enacted in 1977, recognizes the Shari'a civil law system as part of national law. However, it applies only to Muslims regardless of their place of residence in the country. As part of their strategy for a moral and religious revival in western Mindanao, some Muslim religious leaders (ulamas) argue that the Government should allow Islamic courts to extend their jurisdiction to criminal law cases, a step beyond the many civil law cases that they already can settle as part of the judicial system in western Mindanao. Some ulamas also support the MILF's goal of forming an autonomous region governed in accordance with Islamic law.

*Religious Demography*

Over 85 percent of citizens of this former Spanish colony claim membership in the Roman Catholic Church, according to the most recent official census data on religious preference (1990). Believers within the Christian tradition comprised 93.7 percent of the population. Followers of the Islamic faith totaled 4.6 percent, and Buddhists 0.1 percent. Indigenous and other religious traditions accounted for 1.2 percent of those surveyed. Atheists and persons who did not designate a religious preference equaled 0.3 percent. Some academics question the accuracy of the statistical sampling in the 1990 census. Some Muslim scholars argue that census takers seriously undercounted the number of Muslims because security concerns in western Mindanao, where Muslims are still a majority, often prevented them from conducting accurate counts outside urban areas. Current estimates place the number of Muslims at about 5 million, or approximately 7 percent of the population. Muslims reside principally in Mindanao and nearby islands and are the largest single minority religious group in the country.

There is no available data on "nominal" members of religious organizations. Estimates of nominal members of the largest group, Roman Catholics, range from 60 to 65 percent of the total population. These estimates are based on regular church attendance. El Shaddai, a lay charismatic movement affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, has grown rapidly in the last decade; it claims over 6 million members, but this figure includes congregations abroad, largely composed of Filipino workers.

Among Protestant and other Christian groups, there are numerous denominations, including Seventh-Day Adventists, United Church of Christ, United Meth-

odist, Assemblies of God, and Philippine (Southern) Baptist denominations. In addition there are two churches established by Filipino religious leaders, the Independent Church of the Philippines or Aglipayan and the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ). A majority of the country's nearly 12 million indigenous people reportedly are Christians. However, observers note that many indigenous groups mix elements of their native religions with Christian beliefs and practices.

Most Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. There is a small number of Shi'a believers in the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Zamboanga del Sur. Approximately 19 percent of the population of Mindanao is Muslim, according to the 1990 census. Members of the Muslim minority are concentrated in five provinces of western Mindanao: Maguindanao; Lanao del Sur; Basilan; Sulu; and Tawi-Tawi. There are also significant Muslim communities in nearby Mindanao provinces, including Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, and North Cotabato. There are sizable Muslim neighborhoods in metropolitan Manila on Luzon, and in Palawan.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Intermittent government efforts to integrate Muslims into political and economic society have achieved only limited success to date. Muslims, who are concentrated in the most impoverished parts of western Mindanao, complained that the Government has not made sufficient effort toward economic development in those areas.

The Government's National Ecumenical Commission (NEC) fosters inter-faith dialog among the major religious groups—the Roman Catholic Church, Islam, Iglesia ni Cristo, the Philippine Independent Church (Aglipayan), and Protestant denominations. The Protestant churches are represented in the NEC by the National Council of Churches of the Philippines and the Council of Evangelical Churches of the Philippines. Members of the NEC met periodically with the President to discuss social and political questions.

Christians, Muslims, and others are free to proselytize.

Based on a traditional policy of promoting moral education, local public schools make available to church groups the opportunity to teach moral values during school hours. Attendance is not mandatory, and various churches rotate in sharing classroom space. In many parts of Mindanao, Muslim students routinely attend Catholic schools from elementary to university level. These students are not required to undertake Catholic religious instruction.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious affiliation is customarily a function of a person's family, ethnic group, or tribal membership. Historically, Muslims have been alienated socially from the dominant Christian majority. Intermittent government efforts to integrate Muslims into political and economic society have achieved only limited success to date. Muslims, who are concentrated in the most impoverished parts of western Mindanao, complained that the Government made insufficient efforts toward economic development in these areas.

Christian and Muslim communities live in proximity throughout central and western Mindanao and, in many areas, their relationship is harmonious. However, efforts by the dominant Christian population to resettle in traditionally Muslim areas, particularly over the past 60 years, have brought resentment from some Muslim residents.

Muslims view Christian proselytizing as an extension of a historical effort by the Christian majority to deprive them of their homeland and cultural identity as well as their religion. Christian missionaries work in most parts of western Mindanao, often within Muslim communities. The killing of Roman Catholic bishop Benjamin de Jesus in Jolo City in Sulu province near Mindanao in 1997 still has not been resolved, but most observers doubt that the motivation for the killing was rooted in religious differences.

Religious dialog and cooperation among the country's various religious communities are generally amicable. Many religious leaders are involved in ecumenical activities and also in interdenominational efforts to alleviate poverty. The Inter-faith Group, which is registered as a nongovernmental organization, includes Roman

Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant church representatives who have joined together in an effort to support the Mindanao peace process through work with communities of former combatants. Besides social and economic support, the Inter-faith Group seeks to encourage Mindanao communities to instill their faiths in their children.

Amicable ties between religious groups are reflected in many unofficial organizations. The leadership of human rights groups, trade union confederations, and industry associations represent many religious persuasions.

The national culture, with its emphasis on familial, tribal, and regional loyalties, creates informal barriers whereby access to jobs or resources is provided first to those of one's own family or group. Some employers have a biased expectation that Muslims have a lower educational level. Many Muslims claim that they continue to be underrepresented in senior civilian and military positions. Predominantly Muslim provinces in Mindanao continue to lag behind the rest of the island of Mindanao in almost all aspects of socioeconomic development.

As part of their strategy for a moral and religious revival in western Mindanao, some Muslim religious leaders (ulamas) argue that the Government should allow Islamic courts to extend their jurisdiction to criminal law cases, a step beyond the many civil law cases they already can settle as part of the judicial system in western Mindanao. Some ulamas also support the MILF's goal of forming an autonomous region governed by Islamic law.

Some Muslim religious leaders asserted that Muslims suffer from economic discrimination, which is reflected in the Government's failure to provide money to stimulate southwestern Mindanao's sluggish economic development. They also cited the lack of proportional Muslim representation in the national government institutions. At present there are no Muslim cabinet secretaries, senators, or Supreme Court justices. Nine Muslims hold seats in the 222-member House of Representatives. Leaders in both Christian and Muslim communities contend that economic disparities and ethnic tensions, more than religious differences, are at the root of the modern separatist movement that emerged in the early 1970's.

The Bishops-Ulams Conference, which meets periodically to deepen mutual doctrinal understanding between Roman Catholic and Muslim leaders in Mindanao, helps further the Mindanao peace process. The co-chairs of the conference are the Archbishop of Davao, Ferdinand Capalla, and the president of the Ulama Association, Majid Mutilan, who is also the governor of Lanao del Sur province. The conference seeks to foster exchanges at the local level between parish priests and local Islamic teachers. Paralleling the dialog fostered by religious leaders, the Silsila Foundation in Zamboanga City hosts a regional exchange among Muslim and Christian academics and local leaders meant to reduce bias and promote cooperation.

Despite the pronounced increase in fighting between government forces and the MILF, there was continuing progress in improving Christian-Muslim relations through the Southern Philippines Council on Peace and Development, which coordinates economic growth in 14 provinces in Mindanao. MNLF chairman Nur Misuari chairs the council. He also serves as the elected governor of the four-province Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM was established in 1990 to meet the demand of Muslims for local autonomy in areas where they are a majority or a substantial minority. In September 1999, the plebiscite promised in the 1996 peace agreement between the Government and the MNLF on autonomy for an expanded Islamic region was postponed for 1 year, and it appears unlikely to take place before 2001.

Continued integration of ex-MNLF fighters into the armed forces and police generally was accomplished without difficulty; in some cases, it eased suspicions between Christians and Muslims. However, progress leading to economic development has been halting, and there was a sharp increase in hostilities between the Government and separate MILF forces beginning in January 2000.

Two prominent terrorist kidnappings by splinter Muslim separatist groups occurred in the first half of 2000 and remain unresolved at the end of the period covered by this report. In both cases, political and religious motives have been voiced.

On March 20, members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), an extremist MNLF offshoot that seeks a separate Islamic state in the southern Philippines, kidnaped 53 persons on Basilan island. Most of the victims were teachers and school children from two schools, one public and one private (Roman Catholic). The headmaster of the Catholic school, a priest, was among those kidnaped. In addition to money, the ASG kidnapers' demands included the creation of a separate Islamic state in Mindanao, the removal of crosses from public places, and an end to the teaching of Christian values in schools. Following negotiations with the Government in April, the ASG released all 24 Muslim hostages but continued to hold all 29 Christians captive. In May 2000, as government troops approached and 15 hostages attempted to escape their captors, the ASG killed four hostages, including the priest. The kid-

napers had tortured some victims, including the priest. Five of the students between the ages of 10 and 13 years were released in June in a “hostage swap” for members of the family of an ASG leader.

On Easter Sunday, April 23, 2000, another band of Islamic separatists with links to the Basilan ASG kidnaped 21 tourists and workers of several nationalities in Malaysia’s Sabah province and brought them to the Philippine island of Jolo in Sulu province. The hostages suffered from hunger, diarrhea, and malnutrition. One Malaysian hostage was released in June 2000, but the others remained in custody at the end of that month. Although the kidnapers originally demanded the establishment of a separate Islamic state and the release of terrorists held in a Western country, their principal objective was ransom money.

The ASG seeks the immediate establishment of an independent Islamic state in the southwestern Philippines. Although many Muslims believe that discrimination against them is rooted in their religious culture, most do not favor the establishment of a separate state, and the overwhelming majority rejects terrorism as a means of achieving a satisfactory level of autonomy. Mainstream Muslim leaders, both domestic and foreign, have strongly criticized the actions of the ASG and its renegade offshoots as “un-Islamic.”

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy staff members have met with representatives of all major faiths to learn about their concerns on a variety of issues. The United States supports the Government’s peace process with Muslim insurgents in Mindanao as a way of contributing to a better climate for inter-faith cooperation. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides training and economic assistance to former MNLF combatants seeking jobs and business opportunities.

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## SAMOA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion along with freedom of thought and conscience, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice. However, local officials at times infringe on these rights.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion along with freedom of thought and conscience, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, local officials at times infringe on these rights.

The preamble to the Constitution acknowledges “an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and traditions.” Nevertheless, while Christianity is constitutionally favored, there is no official or state denomination.

#### *Religious Demography*

As a result of a strong missionary movement in the 19th century, nearly 100 percent of the population is Christian; most of the population is Protestant, although Roman Catholicism is a significant force. Based on the 1991 census, the religious distribution of the population is estimated to be: Congregational Christian Church (43 percent); Catholic (21 percent); Methodist (17 percent); the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (10 percent); and Seventh-Day Adventist (about 3 percent). There are small congregations of other Christian denominations, as well as members of the Baha’i Faith and adherents of Islam. This distribution of church members is reflected throughout the population, but individual villages, particularly small ones, may have only one or two of the major churches represented.

Missionaries operate freely, either as part of one of the established churches, or by conducting independent revival meetings. The major denominations, for example, Congregational, Methodist, Catholic, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,

that are present in the country also have missionaries. There is an independent Christian radio and television station.

The Constitution provides freedom from unwanted religious indoctrination in schools but gives each denomination or religion the right to establish its own schools; these provisions are adhered to in practice. There are both religious and public schools; the public schools do not have religious instruction as part of their curriculum. There are pastoral schools in most villages to provide religious instruction following school hours.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Although the Constitution grants each person the right to change religion or belief and to worship or teach religion alone or with others, in practice the matai (village chiefs) often choose the religious denomination of the aiga (extended family). In previous years, despite the constitutional protection, village councils—in the name of maintaining social harmony within the village—sometimes banished or punished families that did not adhere to the prevailing religious belief in the village. In June 1999, 32 persons were convicted of assault and arson in connection with destruction of the home of a family banished by the Salamumu village council for rejecting the Methodist Church. The families instead were holding private prayer meetings at home. The defendants were fined the equivalent of about \$1,000 each. The judge ruled that the village council should have arraigned them. Sentencing was scheduled to have taken place in August 1999.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

A high percentage of the population attends church weekly. There is strong societal pressure at the village and local level to attend church, participate in church services and activities, and support church leaders and projects financially. In some denominations, such financial contributions often total more than 30 percent of family income.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## SINGAPORE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government bans some religious groups.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The relationship among religious communities in society is generally amicable. The Government does not tolerate speech or actions that affect religious harmony.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government bans some religious groups. The Constitution provides that every citizen or person in the country has a constitutional right to profess, practice, or propagate his religious belief as long as such activities do not breach any other laws relating to public order, public health, or morality.

There is no state religion. However, all religious groups are subject to government scrutiny and must be registered legally under the Societies Act. The 1990 Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, which was prompted by actions that the Govern-

ment perceived as threats to religious harmony, including aggressive and “insensitive” proselytizing and “the mixing of religion and politics,” gave the Government the power to restrain leaders and members of religious groups and institutions from carrying out political activities, criticizing the Government, creating “illwill” between religious groups or carrying out subversive activities. The act also prohibits judicial review of its enforcement or of any possible denial of rights arising from it. The Government deregistered the Singapore Convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1972 and the Unification Church in 1982, making them unlawful societies.

The Government plays an active but limited role in religious affairs. It does not tolerate speech or actions, including ostensibly religious speech or action, that affect racial and religious harmony. The Government also seeks to assure that citizens, the great majority of whom live in publicly subsidized housing, have ready access to religious organizations traditionally associated with their ethnic groups by assisting religious institutions to find space in these public complexes. The Government maintains a semiofficial relationship with the Muslim community through the Islamic Religious Council (MUIS) set up under the Administration of Muslim Law Act. The MUIS advises the Government on concerns of the Muslim community and has some regulatory functions over Muslim religious matters. The Government facilitates some financial assistance to build and maintain mosques.

#### *Religious Demography*

Approximately 77 percent of the citizen and permanent resident population of just over 3.2 million are Chinese, 15 percent are Malay, and 7 percent are Indian. According to an official survey, 86 percent of citizens and residents profess some religious faith or belief. Of this group, slightly more than half (54 percent) practice Buddhism, Taoism, ancestor worship, or other faiths traditionally associated with ethnic Chinese. Approximately 15 percent are Muslim, 13 percent are Christian, and 3 percent are Hindu. Among Christians, the majority of whom are Chinese, non-Catholics, mostly Protestants, outnumber Roman Catholics slightly more than two-to-one. There are also small Sikh, Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Jain communities.

The Constitution acknowledges ethnic Malays as “the indigenous people of Singapore” and charges the Government to support and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social, cultural, and language interests. Virtually all ethnic Malays are Muslim.

The Presidential Council on Minority Rights examines all pending bills to ensure that they are not disadvantageous to a particular group. It also reports to the Government on matters affecting any racial or religious community and investigates complaints. In June 1998, the Government established a select committee, at the request of members of the Muslim community, to consider the community’s views on legislation that could affect the scope of Islamic courts. In October 1999, the Government proposed compulsory education for all children, which prompted concern from the Malay/Muslim community on the fate of madrasahs (Islamic religious schools). In response the Government proposed to exempt madrasah students from compulsory attendance in national schools provided that the students meet minimum standards in core secular subjects such as science, mathematics, and English. No decision was reached by mid-2000.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government restricts certain religions by application of the Societies Act; it has banned Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Unification Church. The Government deregistered and banned the Singapore Congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1972 on the grounds that its roughly 2,000 members refuse to perform military service (which is obligatory for all male citizens), salute the flag, or swear oaths of allegiance to the State. The Government regards such refusal as prejudicial to public welfare and order. Although the Court of Appeals in 1996 upheld the rights of Jehovah’s Witnesses to profess, practice, and propagate their religious belief, the result of deregistration has been to make meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses illegal. The Government also has banned all written materials published by the International Bible Students Association and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, both publishing arms of Jehovah’s Witnesses. In practice this has led to confiscation of Bibles published by the group, even though the Bible itself has not been outlawed.

In 1998 a member of Jehovah’s Witnesses lost a law suit against a government school for wrongful dismissal, allegedly because he refused to sing the national anthem or salute the flag. The Court of Appeals heard his appeal in March 1999 and subsequently denied it.

The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, also known as the Unification Church, was dissolved in 1982 by the Minister for Home Affairs.



Missionaries, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses and representatives of the Unification Church, are permitted to work and to publish and distribute religious texts. However, while the Government does not prohibit evangelical activities in practice, it discourages activities that might upset the balance of intercommunal relations.

The Presidential Council on Religious Harmony reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs on matters affecting the maintenance of religious harmony that are referred to the Council by the Minister or by Parliament. The Council also considers and makes recommendations to the Minister on restraining orders referred to the Council by the Minister. Such orders are directed at individuals to restrain them from causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will, or hostility among religious groups, putting them on notice that they should not repeat the act of conduct, and advising that failure to do so would result in prosecution in a court of law.

The Government does not promote inter-faith understanding directly. However, it sponsors activities to promote interethnic harmony, and, since the primary ethnic minorities are predominantly of one faith (most Malays are Muslim, and most Indians are Hindu), its programs to promote ethnic harmony have implications for inter-faith relations.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious communities in society are generally amicable. Virtually all ethnic Malay citizens are Muslim, and ethnic Malays constitute the great majority of the country's Muslim community. The perspectives held by non-Malays on the Malay community and by Malays on the non-Malay community are made up of attitudes toward ethnicity and religion that are virtually impossible to separate.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Department of Home and Cultural Affairs has a nominal policymaking role concerning religion. It characterizes this role, on the one hand, as keeping a balance between constitutionally protected rights of religious freedom, free speech, and expression; and, on the other hand, maintenance of public order. All religious institutions are required to register with the Government; however, there is no evidence that registration has been denied to any group.

#### *Religious Demography*

Most citizens are members of Christian churches. The Anglican, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Methodist, and Seventh-Day Adventist denominations are represented. Traditional indigenous religious believers, consisting primarily of the Kwaio community on the island of Malaita, account for approximately 5 percent. Other groups, such as the Baha'i Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

Day Saints, and indigenous churches that have broken off from traditional Christian churches, account for another 2 percent. There are believed to be members of additional world religions within the foreign community who are free to practice their religion, but they are not known to proselytize or hold public religious ceremonies. According to the most recent census figures there are only six Muslims in the country.

In general the Government does not subsidize religion. Several schools and health services in the country were built by and continue to be operated by religious organizations. There are schools sponsored by Roman Catholics, the Church of Melanesia, the United Church (Methodist), the South Sea Evangelical Church, and Seventh-Day Adventists. Upon independence the Government recognized that it had neither the funds nor the personnel to take over these institutions and agreed to subsidize their operations. The Government also pays the salaries of most teachers and health staff in the national education system.

The public school curriculum includes 30 minutes daily of religious instruction, the content of which is agreed upon by the Christian churches; students whose parents do not wish them to attend the class are excused. However, the Government does not subsidize church schools that do not align their curriculums with governmental criteria. There is mutual understanding between the Government and the churches but no formal memorandum of understanding. Although theoretically non-Christian religions can be taught in the schools, there is no such instruction at present.

Christianity was brought to the country in the 19th and early 20th centuries by missionaries representing several Western churches: Anglican; Roman Catholic; South Seas Evangelical; Seventh-Day Adventist; and the London Missionary Society (which became the United Church). Some foreign missionaries continue to work in the country. However, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, whose clergy is about 50 percent indigenous, the clergy of the other traditional churches is indigenous. Traditional church missionaries are represented by religions such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, the United Church (Methodist), the South Sea Evangelical Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities. Customarily, government oaths of office are taken on the Bible; however, religious oaths are forbidden by the Constitution and cannot be required.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Although a government minister threatened in late 1999 to deny the Baha'i Faith future program access to the national radio, the matter was settled amicably, and the Baha'i continue to broadcast.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. Joint religious activities, such as religious representation at national events, are organized through the Solomon Islands Christian Association, which is composed of the five traditional churches of the country. Occasionally individual citizens object to the activities of nontraditional denominations and suggest that they be curtailed. However, society in general is tolerant of different religious beliefs and activities.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. During the period covered by this report, the Ambassador and the Embassy's consular officer talked with a representative of the Solomon Islands Christian Council, the director of a human rights nongovernmental organization, and American citizen missionaries regarding the status of religious freedom.

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## THAILAND

Freedom of religion is protected by law, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it does not register new religious groups that have

not been accepted into one of the existing religious governing bodies on doctrinal or other grounds.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations among the major religious communities were generally amicable. However, the Government places some limits on foreign missionaries, and it does not recognize new religious faiths outside of the seven existing groupings.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Freedom of religion is protected by law, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it restricts the activities of some groups. The Constitution requires that the monarch be a Buddhist. The state religion is in effect Theravada Buddhism; however, it is not designated as such. When the Constitution was being drafted in 1997, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly rejected a proposal to have Theravada Buddhism named the official religion on the grounds that such an action would create social division and be “offensive” to other religious communities in the country.

The Government plays an active role in religious affairs. The Religious Affairs Department (RAD), which is located in the Ministry of Education, registers religious organizations. In order to be registered, a religious organization first must be accepted into an officially recognized ecclesiastical group. During the reporting period, there were seven groups including one for the Buddhist community, one for the Muslim community, one for the Catholic community, and four for Protestant denominations. Government registration confers some benefits, including access to state subsidies, tax-exempt status, and preferential allocation of resident visas for organization officials. In practice unregistered religious organizations operate freely.

There were no reports of extortion by local officials.

Under the provisions of the Religious Organizations Act of 1969, the Department of Religious Affairs recognizes a new religion if a national census shows that it has at least 5,000 adherents, has a uniquely recognizable theology, and is not politically active. However, since 1984 the Government has maintained a policy of not recognizing any new religious faiths. This has restricted the activities of some groups that have not been accepted into one of the existing religious governing bodies on doctrinal or other grounds.

The Constitution requires the Government “to patronize and protect Buddhism and other religions.” The State subsidizes the activities of the three largest religious communities (Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian.) During the period covered by this report, the Government provided approximately the equivalent of \$56.3 million to support religious groups. Included in this amount are funds to support Buddhist and Muslim institutes of higher education; to fund religious education programs in public and private schools; to provide daily allowances for monks and Muslim clerics who hold administrative and senior ecclesiastical posts; and to subsidize travel and health care for monks and Muslim clerics. This figure also includes an annual budget for the renovation and repair of Buddhist temples and Muslim mosques, the maintenance of historic Buddhist sites, and the daily upkeep of the Central Mosque in Pattani.

During the period covered by this report, the Government also provided approximately the equivalent of \$75,000 to Christian organizations to support social welfare projects. Catholic and Protestant churches can request government support for renovation and repair work but do not receive a regular budget to maintain church buildings nor do they receive government assistance to support their clergy. The Government considers donations made to maintain Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian buildings to be tax-free income; contributions for these purposes are also tax-deductible for private donors.

### *Religious Demography*

In a 1997 survey, over 99 percent of the population of 60-million professed some religious belief or faith. According to government statistics, 93 percent of the population are Buddhist, and 5 percent are Muslim. However, recent estimates by academics and religious groups suggest that approximately 85 to 90 percent of the population are Theravada Buddhist, and up to 10 percent of the population are Muslim. Estimates also suggest that Christians constitute about 1 percent of the population. There are small animist, Hindu, Sikh, Taoist, Jewish, and Brahman populations. No official statistics exist for atheists or individuals who do not profess a religious faith.

or belief, but recent surveys suggest that they make up less than 1 percent of the population.

The dominant religion is Theravada Buddhism. The Buddhist clergy or Sangha consists of two main schools, which are governed by the same ecclesiastical hierarchy. Monks belonging to the older Mahanikaya school far outnumber those of the Dhammayuttika School, an order that grew out of a 19th century reform movement led by King Mongkut (Rama IV).

Islam is the dominant religion in four of the five southernmost provinces, which border Malaysia. Minority Muslim populations also live in 74 of the 76 provinces. The majority of Muslims are ethnic Malay, but the Muslim population encompasses groups of diverse ethnic and national origin, including descendants of immigrants from South Asia, China, Cambodia, and Indonesia. Government agencies did not use consistent figures to describe the size of the Muslim population during the period covered by this report, but most estimates suggest that Muslims constitute as much as 10 percent of the population. There are approximately 3,200 mosques in 57 provinces, with the largest number (552) in Pattani province. All but a very small number of these mosques are associated with the Sunni branch of Islam. The remainder, estimated by the Religious Affairs Department to be from 1 to 2 percent of the total, are associated with the Shi'a branch.

According to Government statistics, Christians constituted approximately 1.6 percent (1,012,871) of the population in January. Almost half the Christian population lives in Chiang Mai. The rest are in the Bangkok area and in the northeastern provinces. Approximately 25 percent of the Christian population is Roman Catholic. There are also several Protestant denominations. Most Protestant churches belong to one of four umbrella organizations. The oldest of these groupings, the Church of Christ in Thailand, was formed in the mid-1930's. The largest is the Evangelical Foundation of Thailand. Baptists and Seventh-Day Adventists are recognized by government authorities as separate Protestant denominations and are organized under similar umbrella groups.

There are six tribal groups (chao khao) recognized by the Government, with an estimated population of 500,000 to 600,000 persons, whose members generally are described as animists. Syncretistic practices drawn from Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and ethnic Tai spirit worship are common. The Hindu and Sikh communities have an estimated population of about 19,000 persons. Both are associated with small immigrant groups that arrived from South Asia during the twentieth century, although Brahman temples had been established in Bangkok as early as 1784. The majority of Hindus and Sikhs live in Chonburi, Bangkok, and Phuket provinces.

The ethnic Chinese minority (Sino-Thai) has retained some popular religious traditions from China, including adherence to popular Taoist beliefs. Members of the Mien hill tribe follow a form of Taoism.

Mahayana Buddhism is practiced primarily by small groups of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants. There were 8 Chinese temples and 11 Vietnamese temples in 1998.

The Government actively sponsors inter-faith dialog in accordance with the Constitution, which requires the State to "promote good understanding and harmony among followers of all religions." The Government funds regular meetings and public education programs. These programs included the RAD annual inter-faith meeting for representatives of all religious groups certified by RAD. The September meeting in Bangkok drew 200 participants. They also included monthly meetings of the 17-member Subcommittee on Religious Relations, located within the Prime Minister's National Identity Promotion Office (The Subcommittee is composed of one representative from the Buddhist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Hindu, and Sikh communities in addition to civil servants from several government agencies), and a 1-week education program coorganized by the National Identity Promotion Office and the National Council on Social Welfare. The latter event is held each December in celebration of the King's birthday. Representatives from every religious organization recognized by the RAD are invited to attend seminars associated with the event. The program also targets the general public through films and public displays.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government has not recognized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

Two branches of the Government investigated religious groups alleged to be engaged in cult activities prior to the period covered by this report. In 1998 the National Security Council and the House Standing Committee on Religion, Arts, and Cultural Affairs initiated an investigation into the alleged "cultish practices" of the Hope of Thai People Foundation after complaints were filed at the Religious Affairs

Department by parents claiming that their children had isolated themselves from friends and family after joining the church. In January 1999, the House Standing Committee moved to consider a petition filed by a Senator requesting that the foundation's activities be investigated. In response the foundation filed a law suit against the committee chairman for defamation in May 1999. The law suit against the former chairman, now a senator-elect, remains in litigation. No further committee action was taken.

The Government permitted foreign missionary groups to work freely throughout the country, although it also maintained policies that favored proselytizing by its citizens.

The number of foreign missionaries officially registered with the Government is limited to a quota that originally was established by the Religious Affairs Department in 1982. The quota is divided along both religious and denominational lines and is considered sensitive for this reason. The Government does not publish or release its quotas for particular religious denominations. In May 2000, there reportedly were from 1,900 to 2,000 foreign missionaries legally registered, including 422 Roman Catholic, 1,050 Protestant, 150 Mormon, and 10 Muslim missionaries. In September 1999, the RAD increased the quota for Mormon missionaries from a quota of 100 to 150.

While official registration conferred some benefits, such as longer terms for visa stays, it was not a significant barrier to foreign missionary activity during the period covered by this report. Many foreign missionaries entered the country using tourist visas and proselytized or disseminated religious literature without the acknowledgment of the Religious Affairs Department. There were no reports that foreign missionaries were deported or harassed for working without registration, although the activities of Muslim professors and clerics were subjected disproportionately to scrutiny on national security grounds because of continued government concern about the potential resurgence of Muslim separatist activities in the south.

Citizens proselytize freely. Monks working as Buddhist missionaries (Dhammaduta) have been active since the end of World War II, particularly in border areas among the country's tribal populations. In April 2000, there were approximately 3,000 Dhammaduta working in the country. In addition the Government sponsored the international travel of another 748 Buddhist monks sent by their temples to disseminate religious information abroad. Christian and Muslim organizations also reported having smaller numbers of citizens working as missionaries in Thailand and abroad.

Religious instruction is required in public schools at both the primary (grades 1 through 6) and secondary (grades 7 through 12) education levels. Students at the primary level are required to take 80 hours of instruction per academic year in religious studies classes. Instruction is limited to Buddhism and Islam. During the period covered by this report, some parts of the country with large Muslim student populations did not have Muslim studies courses. Muslim students in these schools generally were directed to school libraries to participate in Muslim self-study courses.

The Constitution provides for, and citizens generally enjoy, a large measure of freedom of speech. However, laws prohibiting speech likely to insult Buddhism remain in place under the 1997 Constitution. The police, who have legal authority under the Printing and Advertisement Act of 1941 to issue written warnings or orders suspending the publication or distribution of printed materials considered offensive to public morals, confiscated a book in December, written by a Phra Dhammakaya temple follower, which attacked a monk who is one of the chief critics of that temple. In December the police issued an arrest warrant for the author for defamation of character.

National Identity Cards produced by the Ministry of Interior since April 12, 1999 include a designation of the religious affiliation of the holder for the first time. The 1999 change in policy was implemented in response to the demands of parliamentarians who wanted easier identification of individuals requiring Muslim burial. Individuals who fail or choose not to indicate religious affiliation in their applications can be issued cards without religious information.

Muslim female civil servants are not permitted to wear headscarves when dressed in civil servant uniforms.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the major religious communities were generally amicable. As of June, the case of a March 1999 attack in Nonthaburi province, while still open, has not generated any new actions. Although police continue to suspect intradenominational conflict, whether the bombing was due to religious motives is not known.

None of the religious communities led "ecumenical" movements.

The Constitution states that discrimination against a person on the grounds of "a difference in religious belief" shall not be permitted. There was no significant pattern of religious discrimination during the period covered by this report. Religious groups closely associated with ethnic minorities, such as Muslims, experience some societal economic discrimination. The Government maintained longstanding policies designed to integrate Muslim communities into society through developmental efforts and expanded educational opportunities, as well as policies designed to increase the number of appointments to local and provincial positions where Muslims traditionally have been underrepresented.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discussed religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The current Ambassador as well as his predecessor, met repeatedly with government officials to request an increase in the number of visas for missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and to call for official recognition of the church.

**TONGA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The Constitution states that the "Sabbath day" (Sunday) "be kept holy" and that no business can be conducted "except according to law." Although an exception is made for hotels and resorts that are part of the tourism industry, the "Sunday ban" is enforced strictly. All religious groups are permitted dutyfree entry of goods intended for religious purposes, but no religious group is subsidized or granted tax free status.

*Religious Demography*

According to the last official census (1996), the membership by percentage of population of major denominations is: Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, 41 percent; Roman Catholic, 16 percent; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), 14 percent; Free Church of Tonga, 12 percent; others, 17 percent. However, both Roman Catholics and the Mormon Church state that from 30 to 40 percent of all citizens are members of their faiths. Members of the Tokaikolo Church, Seventh-Day Adventists, Assembly of God, Anglicans, the Baha'i Faith, Islam, and Hinduism are represented in much smaller numbers.

Western missionaries, particularly members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and other Christian denominations, proselytize freely. There are a number of schools operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and by the Wesleyan Church.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC) maintains policy guidelines regarding the broadcast of religious programming on Radio Tonga. The TBC guidelines state that in view of “the character of the listening public” those who preach on Radio Tonga must confine their preaching “within the limits of the mainstream Christian tradition.” Due to this policy, the TBC does not allow discussions by members of the Baha’i Faith of its founder, Bahauallah, by name, or of the tenets of their religions. Similarly, the TBC does not allow the Mormon Church to discuss its founder, Joseph Smith, and the Book of Mormon by name. This policy applies to all churches. Mormons utilize Radio Tonga for the announcement of church activities and functions. The church appears to be thriving. Members of the Baha’i Faith utilize a privately owned radio station for program activities and the announcement of functions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations among the religious communities.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Officials from the U.S. Embassy in Fiji meet with religious officials and nongovernmental organizations during visits to the country.

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## TUVALU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religious communities in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for separation of church and state and imposes no restrictions on freedom of religion, and the Government respects these provisions in practice.

*Religious Demography*

Both Protestants (Methodists and Anglicans) and Catholics are represented in the country, as well as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Specific figures on church membership are not available.

There are a number of active Christian missionary organizations representing the same religious faiths practiced in the country. Missionaries practice without special restrictions.

The Government has not taken any specific actions to improve inter-religious relations.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Inter-faith relations are amicable. There are no ecumenical movements.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Fiji visit periodically to discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. They also meet with representatives of the religious communities and nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in religious freedom.

The U.S. Embassy actively supports efforts to improve and expand governmental and societal awareness of and protection for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion.

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**VANUATU**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by the report.

Although traditions of communal decisionmaking sometimes conflict with the introduction of new churches in rural communities, government officials use modern law and traditional authority to maintain amicable relations among established and new churches. Both government policy and the strength of traditional authority figures contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The preamble of the Constitution refers to a commitment to traditional values and Christian principles; however, the Constitution also provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

In 1995 in response to concerns expressed by some established churches about the activities of new missionary groups, such as the Holiness Fellowship, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Parliament passed the Religious Bodies Act. However, the President never signed the act, and it never has been enforced. A few churches registered with the Government voluntarily, while some church representatives believe that it had a chilling effect on new missionary activity.

*Religious Demography*

The great majority of the population belongs to Christian churches, although many combine their Christian faith with some pre-Christian cultural practices. Church membership is primarily Presbyterian (approximately 48 percent), Roman Catholic (15 percent), and Anglican (12 percent). Another 30 percent are shared by the Church of Christ, the Apostolic Church, the Assemblies of God, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. The John Frum Movement is centered on the island of Tanna and includes less than 5 percent of the population. Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Latter-Day Saints reportedly also are active. There are believed to be members of other religions within the foreign community who are free to practice their religions, but they are not known to proselytize or hold public religious ceremonies.

The Government interacts with churches through the Department of Internal Affairs and the Vanuatu Christian Council. Customarily, government oaths of office are taken on the Bible. The Government provides some financial help for the construction of churches for council members, provides grants to churchoperated schools, and pays the national teaching staffs. These benefits are not available to non-Christian religious organizations. Government schools also schedule time each week for religious education conducted by representatives of council churches, using materials designed by those churches. Students whose parents do not wish them to



attend the class are excused. Non-Christian religions are not permitted to teach their religions in the public schools.

Aside from the activities of the Department of Internal Affairs, use of government resources to support religious activities is not condoned (although there is no specific law prohibiting such support). If a formal request is given to the Government and permission is granted, governmental resources may be used. The Ombudsman's Office investigated the Minister of Health for allegedly using his office and stationery to solicit contributions for the John Frum Movement, a political party that is an indigenous religious movement on the island of Tanna.

Missionaries representing several Western churches brought Christianity to the country in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some foreign missionaries continue this work; however, the clergy of the established churches is now primarily indigenous. Current missionary activity includes the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which translates the New Testament into indigenous languages. The Government does not attempt to control missionary activity, which includes representatives from the Church of Christ, Presbyterians, Seventh-Day Adventists, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities.

There was no change in the status for respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. However, some churches and individuals object to the missionary activities of nontraditional denominations and continue to suggest that they be curtailed. There continues to be pressure to reinstate controls.

Religious representation at national events is organized through the Vanuatu Christian Council. Ecumenical activities of the council are limited to the interaction of its members.

In rural areas, traditional Melanesian communal decisionmaking predominates. If a member of the community wants to start something new, such as a new church, the chief and the rest of the community must agree. If a new church is started without community approval, the community views this action as a gesture of defiance by those who join the new church and as a threat to community solidarity. However, the resulting turmoil so far has been resolved through appeals from traditional leaders to uphold individual rights. For example, during the period covered by this report, threats that community members in North Ambrym had made against fellow villagers who supported a new church in the area were defused by a radio appeal to the villagers from the national police commissioner. This appeal was couched in terms of respect for the Constitution and individual rights.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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## VIETNAM

Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of worship; however, the Government continued to restrict significantly those organized activities of religious groups that it declared to be at variance with state laws and policies. The Government generally allowed persons to practice individual worship in the religion of their choice, and participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly. However, government restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of most religious groups remained in place, and religious groups faced difficulties in training and ordaining clergy, publishing religious materials, and conducting educational and humanitarian activities. The Government requires religious groups to register and uses this process to control and monitor church organizations. The Government recognizes six official religious bodies: One

each for Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Muslim believers.

On balance, conditions for religious freedom remained fundamentally the same during the period covered by this report compared with the period from mid-1998 to mid-1999. However, there were improvements in some areas such as the release of more than 1 dozen ethnic Hmong Protestants and 3 Catholic priests and growth in worship activities. In addition, in some parts of the country, there was continued gradual expansion of the parameters for individual believers of officially recognized churches, particularly some Buddhists and Catholics, to practice their faiths publicly without major interference from government officials. However, most of the serious restrictions imposed on religious freedom between mid-1998 and mid-1999 continued.

The Government used the lack of official recognition of several groups as a pretext to harass some believers, in particular certain groups of Buddhists, as well as Protestants, and Hoa Hao, who lack legal sanction. Police routinely questioned persons who held dissident religious views and arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practices. Many Protestant Christians who worshipped in house churches in ethnic minority areas were subjected to arbitrary detention by local officials who broke up unsanctioned religious meetings there. Authorities imprisoned persons for practicing religion illegally by using provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years for "abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion." There were at least 15 reported Hoa Hao and Protestant religious detainees held without charge. In addition the Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), Thich Huyen Quang, continued to be held in Quang Ngai in conditions resembling administrative detention. An unconfirmed report stated that one Hmong Christian, Lu Seo Dieu, died in prison in 1999 in Lao Cai province from mistreatment and lack of medical care in detention. There are reportedly 13 religious prisoners. In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities, and there were some modest attempts at ecumenical cooperation and dialog in Ho Chi Minh City.

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City maintained an active and regular dialog with senior- and working-level government officials to advocate for greater religious freedom. The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officers raised with cabinet ministers, Communist Party officials, and provincial officials, concerns of the U.S. government and citizens of other countries about the detention and arrest of religious figures and other restrictions on religious freedom. The Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Robert Seiple, visited the country in July 1999 for discussions with government officials and leaders of several religious bodies. In several cases, intervention by the U.S. Government resulted in improvements such as the release of some prisoners.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of worship; however, the Government continued to restrict significantly those organized activities of religious groups that it declared to be at variance with state laws and policies. The Government generally allowed persons to practice individual worship in the religion of their choice, and participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly. However, the Government uses regulations to control religious hierarchies and organized religious activities closely, in part because the Communist Party fears that organized religion may weaken its authority and influence by serving as a political, social, and spiritual alternative to the authority of the central Government.

The Government requires religious groups to register and uses this process to control and monitor church organizations. Under the law, only those activities and organizations expressly sanctioned by the Government are deemed to be legal. The granting or withholding of the official recognition of religious bodies is one of the means by which the Government actively intervenes to restrict religious activities by some believers. In order for a group to obtain official recognition, it must obtain government approval of its leadership and the overall scope of its activities.

Officially recognized religious organizations are able to operate openly in most parts of the country, and followers of these religious bodies are able to worship without government harassment, except in some isolated provinces. Officially recognized organizations must consult with the Government about their religious and administrative operations, although not about their religious tenets of faith. In general religious organizations are confined to dealing specifically with spiritual and with organizational matters. There has been a trend in the past 5 years to accord much greater latitude to followers of recognized religious organizations, and the majority of fol-

lowers of the country's Buddhist and Catholic traditions have benefited from this development. The Government holds conferences to discuss and publicize its religion decrees.

Religious organizations must obtain government permission to hold training seminars, conventions, and celebrations outside the regular religious calendar; to build or remodel places of worship; to engage in charitable activities or operate religious schools; and to train, ordain, promote, or transfer clergy. Many of these restrictive powers lie principally with provincial or city people's committees, and local treatment of religious persons varied widely. Because of the lack of meaningful due process in the legal system, the actions of religious believers are subject to the discretion of local officials in their respective jurisdictions.

National laws that prescribe freedom of belief are enforced unevenly. In some areas, such as parts of Ho Chi Minh City, local officials allow relatively wide latitude to believers; in others, such as isolated provinces of the northwest, central highlands, and central coast, religious believers are subject to significant harassment because of the lack of effective legal enforcement. Some provincial leaders, such as those in certain northwestern provinces, have claimed that there are no religious believers in their provinces since the religious believers there are not recognized officially.

In general religious groups faced difficulty in obtaining teaching materials, expanding training facilities, publishing religious materials, and expanding the number of clergy in religious training in response to increased demand from congregations.

In particular local officials harass a significant minority of religious believers because they operate without legal sanction. Since 1981 leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) have requested repeatedly that their church be granted official recognition, but their requests continue to be rejected in large part because of the strong criticism of the Communist Party by UBCV leaders and their call for democracy and improved conditions of human rights in Vietnam. UBCV leaders continue to be harassed, and their rights severely restricted by the Government. In early 2000, leaders of several churches belonging to the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECV) (the Protestant Tin Lanh churches) in the southern region engaged in quiet discussions with the Government on official recognition of their congregations. These discussions, although stalled at mid-year, were expected to lead eventually to official recognition of the roughly 300 ECV churches throughout the country. In early 2000, several leaders of the Hoa Hao community, including several pre-1975 leaders, openly criticized the Government's 1999 recognition of an official Hoa Hao organization; they claimed that the official group is subservient to the Government and demanded official recognition of their own leadership instead. The Government neither acknowledged the claims of these Hoa Hao believers nor permitted their independent activities.

In practice there are no effective remedies under the law for violations of persons' rights to religious freedom due to the capricious actions of officials. On occasion central authorities have intervened to curb the worst excesses of local harassment. For example, after a district official in Binh Phuoc province ordered the destruction of three Protestant churches in his province, authorities from Hanoi intervened to prevent further destruction, then forced the district leader to retire. However, the court system is subservient to the Communist Party and its political decisions, and in no known case have the courts acted to interpret laws so as to protect a person's right to religious freedom.

#### *Religious Demography*

The Government officially recognizes Buddhist (approximately 50 percent), Roman Catholic (8 percent), Protestant (0.9 percent), Cao Dai (1 percent), Hoa Hao (2 percent), and Muslim (0.1 percent) religious organizations. However, some Buddhist, Protestant, Cao Dai, and Hoa Hao believers do not recognize or participate in the government-approved associations. Some organize their own associations, and thus their organizations are considered illegal by the authorities.

Among the country's religious communities, Buddhism is the dominant religious belief. Many Buddhists practice an amalgam of Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucian traditions that sometimes is called Vietnam's "triple religion." Some estimates suggest that more than half the population of approximately 80 million persons are at least nominally Buddhist, visit pagodas on festival days, and have a world view that is shaped in part by Buddhism, although in reality these beliefs rely on a very expansive definition of the faith. One prominent Buddhist official has estimated that 30 percent of Buddhists are devout and practice their faith regularly. The Government's Office of Religious Affairs uses a much lower estimate of 7 million practicing Buddhists. Mahayana Buddhists, most of whom are part of the eth-

nic Kinh majority, are found throughout the country, especially in the populous areas of the northern and southern delta regions. There are proportionately fewer Buddhists in certain highlands and central lowlands areas, although migration of Kinh to highland areas is changing the distribution somewhat.

A Khmer minority in the south practices Theravada Buddhism. Numbering from perhaps 700,000 to 1 million persons, they live almost exclusively in the Mekong delta.

There are an estimated 6 million Roman Catholics in the country (about 8 percent of the population). The largest concentrations are in southern provinces around Ho Chi Minh City, with other large groups in the northern and central coastal lowlands. In recent years, the Government has eased its efforts to control the Roman Catholic hierarchy by relaxing the requirements that all clergy belong to the government-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association. Few clergy actually belong to this association, which is a loose affiliation of clergy that holds conferences and participates in events with the Communist Party and the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

Authorities allowed the Vatican's ordination of a new archbishop in Ho Chi Minh City in 1998 as well as the ordination of five bishops in other dioceses in 1998 and 1999. A high-level Vatican envoy made his annual visit to the country in May 2000, during which the filling of other vacant bishoprics was discussed. In June 2000, a bishop was named for Da Nang province, and in August 2000, a bishop was named for Vinh Long province. In 1998 a number of bishops traveled to Rome, Italy, for a synod of Asian bishops. Up to 200,000 Catholics gathered in August 1999 at an annual Marian celebration in La Vang in the central part of the country and celebrated their faith freely there.

There are approximately 700,000 Protestants in the country (less than 1 percent of the population), with more than half of these persons belonging to a large number of unregistered evangelical "house churches" that operate in members' homes or in rural villages, many of them in ethnic minority areas. Perhaps 150,000 of the followers of house churches are Pentecostals, who celebrate "gifts of the spirit" through charismatic and ecstatic rites of worship.

Reports from believers indicated that Protestant church attendance grew substantially during the period covered by this report, especially among the house churches, despite continued government restrictions on proselytizing activities.

Based on believers' estimates, two-thirds of Protestants are members of ethnic minorities, including ethnic Hmong (some 120,000 followers) in the northwest provinces and some 200,000 members of ethnic minority groups of the central highlands (Ede, Jarai, Bahnar, and Koho, among others). The house churches in ethnic minority areas have been growing rapidly in recent years, sparked in part by radio broadcasts in ethnic minority languages from the Philippines.

The Office of Religious Affairs estimates that there are 1.1 million Cao Dai followers (just over 1 percent of the population). Some nongovernmental organization (NGO) sources estimate that there may be from 2 to 3 million followers. Cao Dai groups are most active in Tay Ninh province, where the Cao Dai Holy See is located, and in Ho Chi Minh City, the Mekong delta, and Hanoi. There are separate groups within the Cao Dai religion, which is syncretistic, combining elements of many faiths. Its basic belief system is influenced strongly by Mahayana Buddhism, although it recognizes a diverse array of persons who have conveyed divine revelation, including Siddhartha, Jesus, Lao-Tse, Confucius, and Moses.

Hoa Hao, considered by some of its followers to be a "reform" branch of Buddhism, was founded in the southern part of the country in 1939. Hoa Hao is a largely privatistic faith that does not have a priesthood and rejects many of the ceremonial aspects of mainstream Buddhism. Hoa Hao followers are concentrated in the Mekong delta, particularly in provinces such as An Giang, where the Hoa Hao were dominant as a political and religious force before 1975. According to the Office of Religious Affairs, there are 1.3 million Hoa Hao followers; church-affiliated expatriate groups suggest that there may be 2 million to 3 million. A government-organized group of 160 Hoa Hao held a congress in May 1999 in An Giang. The congress established an 11-member committee to oversee the administrative affairs of the religion. Establishment of the committee constituted official governmental recognition of the religion for the first time in 25 years, although a number of the pre-1975 leaders of the Hoa Hao oppose the official group as subservient to the Government and not faithful to Hoa Hao traditions.

Mosques serving the country's small Muslim population, estimated at 50,000 persons, operate in western An Giang province, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and other provinces in the southern part of the country. The Muslim community is composed of ethnic Cham in the southern coastal provinces and western Mekong delta. The Muslim community also includes some ethnic Vietnamese, and migrants originally from Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. Most practice Sunni Islam.

The Muslim Association of Vietnam was banned in 1975 but authorized again in 1992. It is the only official Muslim organization. Association leaders say that they are able to practice their faith, including daily prayer, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Government no longer restricts Muslims from making the Hajj. Roughly 1 dozen Muslims journey to Mecca for the Hajj each year.

There are a variety of smaller religious communities. An estimated 8,000 Hindus are concentrated in the south, including some ethnic Chams on the south central coast who practice Hinduism.

There are estimated to be between from several hundred to 2,000 Baha'i believers, largely concentrated in the south; prior to 1975, there were an estimated 130,000 believers, according to church officials.

There are several hundred members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) who are spread throughout the country but live primarily in the Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi areas.

The prominent position of Buddhism does not affect adversely religious freedom for others, including those who wish not to practice a religion. The secular Government does not favor a particular religion. The Constitution expressly protects the right of "nonbelief" as well as "belief." Of the country's approximately 80 million citizens, 14 million or more reportedly do not practice any organized religion. Some sources strictly define those considered to be practicing Buddhists, excluding those whose activities are limited to visiting pagodas on ceremonial holidays. Using this definition, the number of nonreligious persons would be much higher, perhaps as high as 50 million persons.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government continued to maintain broad legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom, although in many areas, Buddhists, Catholics, and Protestants reported an increase in religious activity and observance. However, worshipers in several Buddhist, Catholic, and Cao Dai centers of worship reported that they believed that undercover government observers attended worship services to monitor the activities of the congregation and the clergy.

Operational and organizational restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of most religious groups remained in place. Religious groups faced difficulty in obtaining teaching materials, expanding training facilities, publishing religious materials, and expanding the number of clergy in religious training in response to increased demand from congregations. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, faces many restrictions on the training and ordination of priests, nuns, and bishops, and this restriction limits pastoral ministry. Likewise, the Government restricted the number of clergy that the Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, and Cao Dai Churches may train. Restrictions remained on the numbers of Buddhist monks and Catholic seminarians. Protestants were not allowed to operate a seminary or to ordain new clergy.

The Government requires all Buddhist monks to work under an officially approved umbrella organization, the Central Buddhist Church of Vietnam. The Government opposed efforts by the nongovernment-sanctioned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) to operate independently, and tension between the Government and the UBCV continued. Several prominent UBCV monks, including Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, continued to face government restrictions on their civil liberties during the period covered by this report.

In April 2000, a local people's committee in Hanoi reportedly pressured the chief abbot of the historic One-Pillar Pagoda to step down in favor of an abbot with close ties to the Communist Party but no links to the pagoda. The chief abbot, whose pagoda is affiliated with the official Buddhist organization, resisted the effort and protested that this violated the state-sponsored church's statutes.

The Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECV), which comprises the network of Tin Lanh (Good News) churches and originally was founded by the Christian and Missionary Alliance early in the 20th century, generally operated with greater freedom than did the house churches. The roughly 300 Tin Lanh churches in the country are concentrated in the major cities, including Ho Chi Minh City, Danang, Hanoi, and in lowland areas. Some 15 ECV churches in the northern provinces are the only officially recognized Protestant churches. Leaders of several ECV churches in the south discussed with the Government official recognition of their congregations, and, although stalled at mid-year, this process is expected to lead to eventual official recognition of the ECV churches throughout the country.

One of the pastors of the main ECV church in Hanoi continued to be pressured by local authorities to step down from the church; government authorities proposed that he be replaced by a church official from Haiphong who was supported by local authorities. The pastor received a letter from local police stating that he had vio-

lated the law because of his past support of unsanctioned religious activities. However, the pastor and the congregation continued to resist this effort to force him to step down, as they have for the past year.

The Government restricts Protestant congregations from cooperating on joint religious observances or other activities, although in some localities there was greater freedom to do so. There is some ecumenical networking among Protestants, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City.

The Government banned and actively discouraged participation in “illegal” religious groups, including the UBCV, Protestant house churches, and the unapproved Hoa Hao and Cao Dai groups. Religious and organizational activities by UBCV monks are illegal, and all UBCV activities outside private temple worship are proscribed. Protestant groups in central and southern provinces and some groups of Hoa Hao believers not affiliated with the group that held the May 2000 congress petitioned the Government for official recognition. They were unsuccessful as of mid-2000. Most evangelical house churches do not attempt to register because they believe that their applications would be denied, and they want to avoid government control.

Provincial officials in Ha Giang and Lai Chau provinces in the north pressured Hmong Christians to recant their faith. Local officials in these areas circulated official provincial documents urging persons to give up illegal “foreign” religion and to practice traditional animist beliefs and ancestor worship. Regional and police newspapers printed articles documenting how persons were deceived into following the house church “cults.” There is evidence that some individuals engaged in deceptive practices under the guise of religious activities.

The local Catholic Church hierarchy remained frustrated by the Government’s restrictions but has learned to accommodate itself to them for many years. A number of clergy reported a modest easing of government control over church activities in certain dioceses. In some areas, the Government relaxed its outright prohibition on the Catholic Church. The Church is able to participate in religious education and charitable activities.

The degree of government control of church activities varied greatly among localities. In some areas, especially in the south, Catholic churches operated kindergartens and engaged in a variety of humanitarian projects. Buddhist groups engage in humanitarian acts in many parts of the country.

Roman Catholic seminaries throughout the country have approximately 500 students enrolled. The Government limits the church to operating six major seminaries and to recruitment of new seminarians only every 2 years. All students must be approved by the Government both upon entering the seminary and prior to their ordination as priests. The Church believes that the number of students being ordained is insufficient to support the growing Catholic population.

A government-controlled management committee has full powers to control the affairs of the Cao Dai faith, thereby managing the church’s operations, its hierarchy, and its clergy. Independent church officials oppose the edicts of this committee as unfaithful to Cao Dai principles and traditions. Despite the Government’s statement in 1997 that it had recognized the Cao Dai Church legally and encouraged Cao Dai believers to expand their groups and practice their faith, many senior clerical positions remain vacant.

The national authorities continue to restrict the distribution of the sacred scriptures of the Hoa Hao.

In April 1999, the Government issued a decree on religion that prescribes the rights and responsibilities of religious believers. The religion decree states that persons formerly detained or imprisoned must obtain special permission from the authorities before they may resume religious activities. The decree also states that no religious organization can reclaim lands or properties taken over by the State following the end of the 1954 war against French rule and the 1975 Communist victory in the south. Despite this blanket prohibition, the Government has returned some church properties confiscated since 1975. The Catholic Church in Ho Chi Minh City has received back two properties from the People’s Committee of the city. On one of the properties, in Cholon, the Church is constructing an HIV/AIDS hospice to be operated by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. The other property is now a church-operated orphanage. One of the vice-chairmen of the official Buddhist Sangha said that about 30 percent of Buddhist properties confiscated in Ho Chi Minh City have been returned since 1975, and from 5 to 10 percent of all Buddhist properties confiscated in the south were returned. By contrast UBCV leaders stated that their properties were not returned. Information concerning prominent Protestant properties, such as the former seminary in Nha Trang, is not available. Most Cao Dai and Hoa Hao properties have not been returned, according to church leaders.

The Government does not permit religious instruction in public schools. The Government restricts persons who belong to dissident and unofficial religious groups from speaking publicly about their beliefs. It officially requires all religious publishing to be done by government-approved publishing houses. Many Buddhist sacred scriptures, Bibles, and other religious texts and publications are printed by these organizations and allowed to be distributed.

The Government allows, and in some cases encourages, links with coreligionists in other countries when the religious groups are approved by the Government. The Government actively discourages contacts between the illegal UBCV and its foreign Buddhist supporters, and between illegal Protestant organizations such as the house churches and their foreign supporters. Contacts between Vatican authorities and the domestic Catholic Church are permitted, and the Government maintains a regular, active dialog with the Vatican on a range of issues including organizational activities, the prospect of establishing diplomatic relations, and a possible papal visit. The Government allows religious travel for some, but not all, religious persons; Muslims are able to undertake the Hajj, and many Buddhist and Catholic officials also have been able to travel abroad. Persons who hold dissident religious opinions generally are not approved for foreign travel.

The Government does not designate persons' religions on passports, although citizens' "family books," which are household identification books, list religious and ethnic affiliation.

The Government prohibits proselytizing by foreign missionary groups, although some missionaries visited the country despite this prohibition. The Government deported some foreign persons for unauthorized proselytizing, sometimes defining proselytizing very broadly. A U.S. pastor who worked as a missionary prior to 1975 was questioned by police and pressured to pay a fine, which he refused to do, after a meeting that he held with Protestant Vietnamese pastors was raided by police in November 1999. His passport and Bible were confiscated temporarily; they were returned shortly before his departure several days later.

Proselytizing by citizens is restricted to regularly scheduled religious services in recognized places of worship. Immigrants and noncitizens must comply with the law when practicing their religions. Catholic and Protestant foreigners exercise leadership in worship services that are reserved for foreigners.

The Office of Religious Affairs hosts periodic meetings to address religious matters according to government-approved agendas that bring together leaders of diverse religious traditions.

Adherence to a religious faith generally does not disadvantage persons in civil, economic, and secular life, although it likely would prevent advancement to the highest government and military ranks. Avowed religious practice is a bar to membership in the Communist Party, although anecdotal reports indicate that a handful of the 2 million Communist Party members are religious believers.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government restricts and monitors all forms of public assembly, including assembly for religious activities. On some occasions, large religious gatherings have been allowed, such as the 1998 and 1999 celebrations at La Vang. Since July 1999, the Hoa Hao also have been allowed to hold two large public gatherings in An Giang province on Hoa Hao festival days. However, dissident Hoa Hao have been prevented by forcible means from organizing their own independent commemorations.

The growth of Protestant house churches in ethnic minority areas has led to tensions with local officials in some provinces. There have been crackdowns on leaders of these churches, particularly among the Hmong in the northwest. The secretive nature of the house churches, particularly among ethnic minorities, has contributed to greater repression against these groups. Provincial officials in certain northwest provinces do not allow churches or pagodas to operate and have arrested and imprisoned believers for practicing their faith nonviolently in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

The authorities in the northwest provinces severely restrict the religious freedom of evangelical Protestants, including ethnic Hmong and ethnic Tai. Credible reports from multiple sources stated that at the beginning of 1999 there were more than 25 Hmong Protestants imprisoned primarily in Lai Chau province for "teaching religion illegally" or "abusing the rights of a citizen to cause social unrest." Following protests by church leaders and international attention to the detentions, officials and Protestant church leaders stated that most of the detainees had been released by the end of 1999. Among those in Lai Chau who were confirmed as released—several of them before their sentences were up—were: Ly A Giang, Giang A Ly, Vang Gia Chua, Giang A To, and Giang A Cat. In addition Hmong leader Vu Gian Thao was released in the April 2000 amnesty, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(MFA) reported that Wang Gia Chua, Sung Seo Chinh, and Sinh Phay Pao also had been released. The sentence of Hmong leader Sung Phai Dia reportedly was to end in March 2000, but there is no confirmation that he was released from prison.

Among those Hmong Protestant leaders still believed to be imprisoned are four Hmong Protestant leaders—Sinh Phay Pao, Va Sinh Giay, Vang Sua Giang, and Phang A Dong—who had been arrested in Ha Giang province late in 1999. Phang A Dong was charged with illegally traveling to China without a visa or passport.

The Government's repression of the Hmong is complicated by several factors that include religious practices. Some Hmong citizens fought against the Government in the past, and they live in sensitive regions that border China and Laos; these factors together lead the Government to question their civic loyalty. Among the Hmong, there are two distinct religious groups. One group's members follow a traditional form of Christianity, and another group's beliefs are characterized by an element that is cultic in nature. The latter group's eschatological worldview includes a predicted cataclysmic event in 2000. However, the Government does not differentiate between the two groups; their beliefs exacerbate the authorities' anxiety about the Hmong.

In December 1999, Nguyen Thi Thuy, a Protestant house church leader in Phu Tho province, was sentenced to 1 year in prison for "interfering with an officer doing his duty." Thuy was arrested during a police raid on her home, where she was leading a Bible study group. In March 2000, in what is believed to be the first case of its kind, a defense lawyer appealed Thuy's conviction by arguing that her arrest in her home while practicing her faith violated her constitutional right to religious freedom. However, a judge dismissed her appeal, and her 1-year sentence was upheld. She is scheduled to be released in October 2000. An ethnic Hre church leader, Dinh Troi, was detained in Quang Ngai province in 1999, and it is believed that he was still in detention as of mid-2000. Two of his church colleagues, Dinh Bim and Dinh Hay, were released in July and September 1999, respectively.

In July 1999, district authorities in Binh Phuoc province demolished three Protestant churches. Their congregations, composed of ethnic Mhong and Stieng Christians, protested to the central government authorities and the international community. Church officials reported that the central authorities intervened to prevent the further razing of churches. In December 1999, the district official responsible was removed from office. Binh Phuoc province Christians reported that they were able to celebrate Christmas openly and peacefully.

There were reported instances, particularly in isolated provinces in the northwest and central highlands, in which Protestant house church followers were punished or fined by local officials for participation in peaceful religious activities such as worship and Bible study. Unconfirmed reports from the central highlands suggested that some local officials extorted cattle and money from Protestants in those areas. It is unclear whether their religious affiliation or other factors led to this extortion.

In recent years, the conditions faced by Baha'is have improved in some localities where Baha'is have been able to practice their faith quietly with local permission. However, a Baha'i community in Danang was unable to obtain approval of its recent application for registration of official religious activities.

In mid-1999, the Government sharply criticized adherents of the Taiwan-based group Thanh Hai Vo Thuong Su in official media. In July 1999, a local police paper publication criticized the group, stating that more than 100 followers joined the group in Long An province. Government media portray the group's leader, an ethnic Taiwanese woman named Thanh Hai, who founded the group in 1989, as a charlatan.

Credible reports from multiple sources stated that Hmong Protestant Christians in several northwestern villages were forced by local officials to recant their faith and to perform traditional Hmong religious rites such as drinking blood from sacrificed chickens mixed with rice wine. Similarly, a group of Catholics in Son La province also reported that they were forced by local officials to recant their faith publicly in December 1999.

Hmong Protestant Church leaders told a North American church official that one Hmong Christian, Lu Seo Dieu, died in prison in 1999 in Lao Cai province from mistreatment and lack of medical care. This report could not be confirmed.

Police authorities routinely question persons who hold dissident religious or political views. In May 1999, two pastors of the unsanctioned Assemblies of God, pastors Tran Dinh "Paul" Ai and Lo Van Hen, were detained and questioned by police after a Bible study session that they were conducting in Hanoi was raided by local police. Ai was questioned daily for more than 2 weeks regarding his religious activities, and Lo Van Hen, a member of the Black Tai ethnic minority, was returned to Dien Bien Phu for further questioning by police. Both were released before the end of May 1999 and allowed to return home. In December 1999, Ai was issued a passport and



allowed to travel to the United States with his family on a religious worker visa. Similarly, on two occasions, UBCV leader Thich Khong Tanh was called in for questioning by police for what appeared to be purely religious activities.

Credible reports suggest that police arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practice. On several occasions, small groups of Protestant Christians belonging to house churches were subjected to arbitrary detention after local officials broke up unsanctioned religious meetings. In September 1999, in Quang Nam province, 17 Protestant Christians were handcuffed together and forced to go to a government office for several hours of questioning about their religious activities. One man who reportedly was beaten by police required medical treatment. In October 1999, police raided a church meeting in a hotel in Ha Long Bay town and detained 30 Protestants. Most were released after questioning, although three were held for several days.

A 1997 directive on administrative detention gives national and local security officials broad powers to detain and monitor citizens and control where they live and work for up to 2 years if they are believed to be threatening "national security." In their implementation of administrative detention, authorities held some persons under conditions resembling house arrest. The authorities use administrative detention as a means of controlling persons whom they believe hold dissident opinions.

The Government continued to isolate certain political and religious dissidents by restricting their movements and by pressuring the supporters and family members of others. For the past 6 years, Thich Huyen Quang, the Supreme Patriarch of the UBCV, lived at a pagoda in Quang Ngai province under conditions resembling administrative detention. From 1981 until 1994, he was held at another pagoda in that province. In March 1999, he was visited by senior UBCV leader Thich Quang Do for the first time in 18 years, but after 3 days of meetings both were held for questioning by police, and Thich Quang Do was escorted by police to his pagoda in Ho Chi Minh city. Thich Huyen Quang confirmed that he must request permission before leaving the pagoda and is not allowed to lead prayers or participate in worship activities as a monk. He is able to receive visits from sympathetic monks, sometimes several per week; UBCV monk Thich Khong Thanh visited in November. After meeting with him, visitors are questioned by police. Thich Huyen Quang has called for the Government to recognize and sanction the operations of the UBCV. In December 1999, he told a Western visitor that he was receiving adequate medical care. Later that month, because of heavy flooding in the province, police temporarily evacuated him from the pagoda, then returned him there 2 days later, after the waters had receded. Government officials reportedly have proposed to move Thich Huyen Quang to Hanoi, where medical care for his chronic conditions would be better, but he has refused.

In September 1999, Thich Duang Do complained that fellow UBCV monk Thich Khong Tanh, who is head of the church's social affairs board, was summoned by police for questioning in Ho Chi Minh City. In April 2000, Thich Khong Tanh similarly complained that he was detained for questioning by police after visiting fellow monks in central Vietnam. Thich Quang Do continued to experience close surveillance by police around his pagoda, Thanh Minh Zen monastery in Ho Chi Minh City, and police pressured lay Buddhists at the pagoda in an apparent effort to isolate Thich Quang Do further.

The Government allowed many bishops and priests to travel freely within their dioceses and allowed greater, but still restricted, freedom for travel outside these areas, particularly in many ethnic areas. Local government officials reportedly discourage priests from entering Son La and Lai Chau provinces. Upon return from international travel, citizens, including clergy, officially are required to surrender their passports; this law is enforced unevenly. Some persons who express dissident opinions on religious or political issues are not allowed to travel abroad.

Some Cao Dai believers were detained arbitrarily. In October 1998, the authorities detained two Cao Daists in Kien Giang province, Le Kim Bien and Pham Cong Hien, who sought to meet with United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance Abdelfattah Amor. They were sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment and are scheduled to be released in October 2000. Three Cao Daists, Lam Thai The, Do Hoang Giam, and Van Hoa Vui, who were arrested several years ago, reportedly remain imprisoned in Xuan Loc prison in Dong Nai province. Ly Cong Cuong, a Cao Daist arrested in 1983 in An Giang province, was released in July 1999.

The Hoa Hao have faced severe restrictions on their religious and political activities since 1975, in part because of their previous armed opposition to the Communist forces. Since 1975 all administrative offices, places of worship, and social and cultural institutions connected to the faith have been closed, thereby limiting public religious functions. Believers continue to practice their religion at home. The lack of access to public gathering places contributed to the Hoa Hao community's

isolation and fragmentation. In July 1999, following official recognition of a Hoa Hao religious organization, an estimated 500,000 Hoa Hao believers gathered for a religious festival in An Giang province in the largest Hoa Hao gathering since 1975. Hoa Hao believers stated that a number of church leaders continue to be detained.

In March 2000, hundreds of Hoa Hao gathered in An Giang province for a traditional holy day celebration despite reports of police roadblocks and interception of boats on the river surrounding the island where the celebration was organized. A group of dissident Hoa Hao followers, including prominent pre-1975 leaders such as Le Quang Liem, were attempting to organize an unofficial commemoration of the death of the Hoa Hao founder, but they were blocked by government authorities. In connection with that event, 13 Hoa Hao supporters were detained on March 11, 2000, at Thoai Son in An Giang province; 8 of them were released after being interrogated. Three others—Vo Thanh Liem, Nguyen Van Dien (Bay Dien), and Vo Van Hai—were tried and sentenced on May 26 to 30 months, 20 months, and 12 months' imprisonment, respectively. Two others—Nguyen Van Hoang and Nguyen Van Nhuom—still were detained in Thoai Son as of mid-2000. On March 28, 2000, eight other Hoa Hao supporters were arrested at Phu My (Hoa Hao) village, and five of them still were detained in mid-2000 at the Bang Lang detention facilities in Long Xuyen. These five are: Truong Van Thuc; Tran Van Be Cao; Tran Nguyen Hon; Nguyen Chau Lan; and Le Van Mong (Le Thien Hoa). In addition, in protest of government restrictions on the Hoa Hao, several Hoa Hao believers reportedly have threatened to immolate themselves.

The Penal Code establishes penalties for offenses that are defined only vaguely, including "attempting to undermine national unity" by promoting "division between religious believers and nonbelievers." In some cases, particularly involving Hmong Protestants, authorities imprisoned persons for practicing religion illegally. They use provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years without trial for "abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion." Some of the provisions of the law used to convict religious prisoners contradict the right to freedom of religion in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of religious detainees and religious prisoners. There is little transparency in the justice system, and it is very difficult to obtain confirmation when persons are detained, imprisoned, tried, or released. As of mid-2000, there were at least 13 religious detainees who were held without arrest or charge; however, the number may be greater since sometimes persons are detained for questioning and held under administrative detention regulations without being charged or without their detention being publicized. These persons include: Le Minh Triet (Tu Triet), a Hoa Hao leader detained at a Government house in the south; four Hmong Protestants in Ha Giang province, Sinh Phay Pao, Va Sinh Giay, Vang Sua Giang, and Phang A Dong; Dinh Troi, an ethnic Hre Protestant detained in Quang Ngai in 1999; and seven Hoa Hao followers who were detained in An Giang province in March. These Hoa Hao followers are: Nguyen Van Hoang; Nguyen Van Nhuom; Truong Van Thuc; Tran Van Be Cao; Tran Nguyen Huon; Nguyen Chau Lan; and Le Van Mong (Le Thien Hoa). In addition, others, most prominently Supreme Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang of the UBCV, are held under conditions that resemble administrative detention. Thich Huyen Quang is not allowed to leave the pagoda where he lives in Quang Ngai province without express police permission, and only then for medical appointments in the isolated town where he stays.

There are at least 16 religious prisoners, although the actual number may be higher. This figure is difficult to verify because of the secrecy surrounding the arrest, detention, and release process. In a positive development, many of the ethnic Hmong Protestants who were imprisoned in Lai Chau province at the beginning of 1999 are believed to have been released. Those persons believed to be religious prisoners as of May include: UBCV monks Thich Thein Minh and Thich Hue Dang; Catholic priests Pham Minh Tri, Pham Ngoc Lien, and Nguyen Thien Phung; Protestant house church leader Nguyen Thi Thuy, scheduled to finish her 1-year sentence in October; Hmong Protestant Va Sinh Giay; Hoa Hao lay persons Le Van Son, Vo Thanh Liem, Nguyen Van Dien (Bay Dien), and Vo Van Hai; Cao Daists Le Kim Bien and Pham Cong Hien, who are scheduled to finish their 2-year sentences in October; and Cao Daists Lam Thai The, To Hoang Giam, and Van Hoa Vui, who reportedly remain imprisoned in Dong Nai province.

Credible reports suggest that three Roman Catholic priests belonging to the Congregation of the Mother Co-Redemptrix remain imprisoned. The release in 1999 of one priest, Nguyen Minh Quan, was confirmed, and another, Mai Duc Chuong (Mai Huu Nghi), was released in the April 2000 prisoner amnesty. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that another person, Nguyen Van De, also was released in 1999.

*Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

On balance conditions for religious freedom remained fundamentally the same during the period covered by this report, compared with the period from mid-1998 to mid-1999. However, there were improvements in some areas, such as the release of some persons detained or arrested because of their religious beliefs. In addition, in some parts of the country, there was continued gradual expansion of the parameters for individual believers of officially recognized churches to practice their faiths. Many lay believers who worship in officially recognized churches, especially Buddhists and Catholics in large cities, are able to practice their faith publicly without interference from government officials. This continues a trend of the past few years toward less official interference in the lives of citizens, such as the diminution of the block warden system, which is now much less pervasive and intrusive in monitoring persons. On religious celebration days, churches and pagodas are filled by worshippers. Most of the country's Buddhist and Catholic lay persons benefit from this development.

During the period covered by this report, many of the ethnic minority Protestant prisoners in Lai Chau province were released. Although severe restrictions on religious life remain in the northwest, U.S. and international advocacy on behalf of ethnic minority Christians in those provinces apparently had a positive impact; many of the 25 Hmong church leaders held at the beginning of 1999 were released by mid-2000.

In addition the April 2000 prisoner amnesty included two religious prisoners, Catholic priest Mai Duc Chuong (Mai Huu Nghi) and Hmong Protestant Vu Gian Thao. The MFA said that two other Catholic priests of the Congregation of the Mother CoRedemptrix, Nguyen Minh Quan and Nguyen Van De, had been released in 1999.

In some provinces where harassment of religious believers has been egregious, local officials have lost their positions because of religious restrictions. Most prominently, the district committee chairman in Bu Bang district of Binh Phuoc province was not reelected by the local people's council to his position, and he was forced to retire in November 1999.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities. In Ho Chi Minh City, there are nascent efforts at informal ecumenical dialog by leaders of disparate religious communities. In October 1999, four outspoken religious leaders based in Ho Chi Minh City—UBCV Buddhist leader Thich Quang Do, Redemptorist Catholic priest Chan Tin, Hoa Hao leader Le Quang Liem, and Cao Dai leader Tran Quang Chau—signed a public ecumenical petition urging the Communist Party to respect religious freedom and to establish clear separation of church and state.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and U.S. Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City actively and regularly raised U.S. concerns about religious freedom with a wide variety of government officials including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of Religion, the Ministry of Public Security, and other government offices in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and provincial capitals. Embassy and consulate officials also meet and talk with leaders of all of the major religious groups, recognized as well as unregistered.

The U.S. Ambassador raised religious freedom issues with senior cabinet ministers including the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, senior government and Communist Party advisors, the head of the Government's Office of Religion, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Security, and the chairpersons of Provincial People's Committees around the country, among others. Other embassy and consulate officials also raised U.S. concerns on religious freedom with senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security and with provincial officials. The Embassy and Consulate maintained regular contact with the key government offices responsible for respect for human rights. Embassy officers informed government officials that progress on religious issues and human rights have an impact on the degree of full normalization of bilateral relations. The Embassy's public af-

fairs officer distributed information about U.S. concerns about religious freedom to Communist Party and government officials.

In their representations to the Government, the Ambassador and other embassy officers urged recognition of a broad spectrum of religious groups in accordance with international standards of religious freedom, including members of the UBCV and the Protestant house churches. In general representations by the Embassy and Consulate focused on specific restrictions on religious freedom. These abuses included the detention and arrest of religious figures and restrictions on church organizational activities such as training religious leaders, ordination, church building, and foreign travel of religious figures. Several times the Embassy's and the Consulate's interventions on problems involving religious freedom resulted in improvements. For example, the release of several religious prisoners during amnesties in September 1999 and April 2000 followed long-term and direct advocacy on their behalf by the Embassy. The releases of some 20 Hmong Protestants detained in early 1999 by authorities in Lai Chau province followed demarches by the Embassy. One foreign nongovernmental organization (NGO) first told the U.S. Embassy that officials in Lai Chau had complained that, following the visit of Ambassador Pete Peterson to the province in the spring of 1999, during which he had presented a list of Hmong religious prisoners, the provincial officials had been told by national government authorities to ease up on their treatment of Hmong people.

Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Robert Seiple visited in July 1999 for discussions with officials and leaders of several religious bodies. He urged that the parameters for religious freedom be expanded, during meetings with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government Committee on Religion, and other government offices.

Representatives of the Embassy and Consulate met on several occasions with leaders of all the major religious communities, including Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Muslims. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, maintain a regular dialog with NGO's. An embassy officer visited UBCV Supreme Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang in Quang Ngai province in December, which was the first visit by a Westerner to the Supreme Patriarch in 18 years. Following the visit, Thich Huyen Quang was featured on national television for the first time in years, was moved out of his pagoda during flooding (unlike the previous year), and received improved medical care. On several occasions, embassy and consulate officers met with prominent religious prisoners after their release from prison. Consulate officers maintained an ongoing dialog with Thich Quang Do and other UBCV monks and with officially recognized Buddhists, as well as wide contacts within the Catholic, Protestant, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Muslim communities. A consulate officer attended the first officially recognized Hoa Hao festival in An Giang in July 1999. Consulate and embassy officials worked closely with Assemblies of God pastor Tran Dinh "Paul" Ai to obtain a passport from the Government, then a religious worker's visa to travel to the United States to work in December, following many months of continuous harassment by local police in several areas.

The U.S. Department of State in Washington commented publicly on the status of religious freedom in Vietnam on several occasions. These comments included statements on the conditions faced by Thich Huyen Quang; the status of Paul Ai and his eventual travel to the United States, using a religious worker visa; and gatherings of Hoa Hao believers in An Giang province.

## EUROPE AND CANADA

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### ALBANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. According to the 1998 Constitution, there is no official religion, and all religions are equal. However, the predominant religious communities (Muslim, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic) enjoy de facto recognition by the authorities that gives them the legal right to hold bank accounts, to own property and buildings, and to function as juridical persons based on their historical presence in the country.

Religious movements—with the exception of the three de facto recognized religions—can acquire the official status of a juridical person only by registering under the Law on Associations, which recognizes the status of a nonprofit association irrespective of whether the organization has a cultural, recreational, religious, or humanitarian character. The Government does not require registration or licensing of religious groups; however, the State Committee on Cults maintains a working knowledge, but not official records of foreign religious organizations. The chairman of the committee has the status of a deputy minister.

The State Committee on Cults, which was founded in September 1999 according to a decision of Council Ministers, aims to regulate the relations between the State and religious communities. The committee recognizes the equality of religious communities and respects their independence. The committee works to protect freedom of religion and to promote interreligious development, cooperation, understanding and tolerance. The Committee claims that registration facilitates the granting of residence permits by police to foreign employees of various religious organizations.

Some foreign religious organizations have complained that obtaining registration has not made gaining residence permits any less cumbersome administratively. There is no law or sublegal provision that forces religious organizations to register with the committee. There is no law on religious communities, although one is mandated by the new Constitution. Most religious communities recognize the need for such a law to clarify their rights and responsibilities and relationship to the Government. The committee has shown a willingness to act as a mechanism for creation and passage of such a law.

##### *Religious Demography*

The majority of citizens are secular in orientation after decades of rigidly enforced atheism. Muslims make up the largest traditional religious group and are divided into two communities: those who adhere to a moderate form of Sunni Islam and those who adhere to the Bektashi school (a particularly liberal form of Shi'a Sufism). Albania is the world center of the Bektashi school, which moved from Turkey to Albania in 1925 after the revolution of Ataturk. Bektashis are concentrated mainly in middle and southern Albania and claim that 45 percent of the country's Muslims belong to their school. The Albanian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches are the other large denominations. Approximately 70 percent of the population are Mus-

lim, 20 percent are Albanian Orthodox, and 10 percent are Roman Catholic. The Albanian Orthodox Church split from the Greek Orthodox Church early in the century and adherents strongly identify with the Autocephalous National Church as distinct from the Greek Church. The Albanian Orthodox Church's 1929 statute states that all its archbishops must be of Albanian heritage. However, the current archbishop is a Greek citizen, because there are no Albanian clerics qualified for this position.

The Muslims are concentrated mostly in the middle of the country and somewhat in the south; Orthodox believers are concentrated mainly in the south, and Catholics in the north of the country; however, this division is not strict. The Greek minority, concentrated in the south, belongs to the Orthodox Church. There are no data available on active participation in formal religious services, but unofficial sources state that 30 to 40 percent of the population practice religion. Foreign clergy, including Muslim clerics, Christian and Baha'i missionaries, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and many others freely carry out religious activities.

The State Committee on Cults estimates that there are 12 different Muslim societies and groups with some 324 representatives in the country. There are more than 79 Christian societies and groups, with 344 missionaries representing Christian or Baha'i organizations. The main foreign missionary groups are mostly American, British, Italian, Greek, and Arab.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

In 1967 the Communists banned all religious practices and expropriated the property of the established Islamic, Orthodox, and Catholic Churches. The Government has not yet returned all the properties and religious objects under its control that were confiscated under the Communist regime. In cases where religious buildings were returned, the Government often failed to return the land that surrounds the buildings, sometimes due to redevelopment claims by private individuals who began farming it or using it for other purposes. The Government does not have the resources to compensate churches adequately for the extensive damage many religious properties suffered. The Orthodox Church has complained that it has had difficulty in recovering some religious icons for restoration and safekeeping.

The State recognizes the de facto existence of the Bektashis, but they did not have the right to their own representative in the former State Secretariat of Religions. The Secretariat has been replaced by the State Committee on Cults, which is not composed of representatives of religious groups. There is no indication of the Bektashis' activities being placed under the supervision of the Sunni community.

The Albanian Evangelical Alliance, an association of more than 100 Protestant churches throughout the country, has complained that it has encountered administrative obstacles to building churches, accessing the media, and receiving exemptions from customs duties. The growing evangelical community continues to seek official recognition and participation in the religious affairs section of the Council of Ministers.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious groups are generally amicable, and tolerance is widespread. Society is largely secular. Inter-marriage among religious groups is extremely common. There are amicable relations between the three main religions in the country. At the beginning of 2000, the Orthodox and the Catholic churches wrote, for the first time in their history, a joint declaration on the beginning of the new millennium and the celebration of 2000 years of Christianity.

The Archbishop of the country's Orthodox Church has noted incidents in which the Orthodox and their churches or other buildings have been the targets of vandalism. There were reports that a number of Orthodox churches in the south were burned. The Albanian Helsinki Committee issued a report on August 26, 1999, stating that unknown persons damaged or desecrated more than 10 Orthodox churches and monasteries in 1998 and 1999. In July 1999, a Greek Orthodox church in Ksamil was desecrated with human feces smeared on icons, then set on fire. Also in July 1999, a Greek Orthodox church in Metohi was burned down. However, the Archbishop concluded that the problem in such attacks against the ethnic Greek minority was the country's general climate of insecurity, rather than religious repres-

sion. Members of the ethnic Greek minority as well as of the Orthodox Church left the country in large numbers between 1990 and 1991, with another large exodus between 1997 and 1998 because of the lack of security and poor economic prospects. Ethnic Greek citizens, among others, continue to leave the country in search of employment and/or permanent residence elsewhere.

The longstanding concerns among Christians about the growing support for Islamic fundamentalism were heightened as a result of the influx of Kosovar refugees into the country. After the war, nearly all the Kosovar refugees left the country, and there were no indications of a growth of fundamentalism among the few that remained. The concern among the Christians regarding this issue remains the same as before the influx of Kosovars. After the war, the fundamentalist associations, active in Albania during the war, were later displaced into Kosovo.

The Baha'is are no longer considered a threat by the Sunnis and Orthodox Christians. They have established a good reputation and the community is expanding rapidly.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has numerous initiatives to foster the development of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the country, which also furthers religious freedom and tolerance. The U.S. Embassy periodically has urged the Government to return the church lands to the denominations that lost them under Communist rule. In 1999 and 2000 the U.S. Embassy urged the Government to restore land that was seized from the Orthodox Church in Gjirokastra and asked the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to assist through the Land Tenure Center Project. The Embassy and USAID also are providing support together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the U.N. for the drafting of the law on freedom of religion.

Embassy officers—including the Chief of Mission—meet frequently, both in formal office calls and at representational events, with the heads of the major religious communities in the country. The U.S. Embassy has been active in urging tolerance and moderation on the part of the Albanian Government's Committee on Cults.

## ANDORRA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The Constitution acknowledges a special relationship with the Roman 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 Bishop Joan Martí Alanis of the Spanish town of La Seu d'Urgell.

The Catholic Church receives no direct subsidies from the Government. However, the Government continues to pay monthly stipends to each of the seven parishes (administrative units of government, though the term was originally religiously determined) for the continuance of their historic work in maintaining vital records, such as birth and marriage, despite having a fully legal civil registry system in the country.

There is currently no law that clearly requires legal registration and approval of religions and religious worship. However, the Government is considering completing a draft law on associations that may ultimately govern some aspects of religious activity. Although the terms of the draft law are not publicly known, the authorities reportedly are considering how to treat the activity of so-called "sects" or other groups whose activities may be considered injurious to public health, safety, morals,

or order. Under a 1993 law, associations must be registered. This register has documented civic associations, but to date no religious organization, including the Roman Catholic Church, has requested registration or been asked by the Government to register.

#### *Religious Demography*

Very few official statistics are available relative to religion; however, traditionally approximately 90 percent of the population are Roman Catholic. The population consists largely of immigrants, with full citizens representing less than 20 percent of the total. Immigrants, primarily from Spain, Portugal, and France, compose the bulk of the population and are also largely Roman Catholic. It is estimated that, of the Catholic population, about half are active church attendees. Other religions include Islam (predominately represented among the roughly 2,000 North African immigrants); the New Apostolic Church; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; several Protestant denominations, including the Anglican Church; the Re-unification Church; and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Instruction in the tenets of the Catholic faith is available in public schools on an optional basis, outside of both regular school hours and the time frame 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. Some parental groups and Co-Prince Bishop Marti reportedly prefer restoring the optional religion classes to the time frame set aside for elective activities.

Foreign missionaries are active and operate without restriction. For example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses proselytize door to door.

The Government has not taken any official steps to promote inter-faith understanding, nor has it sponsored any programs or forums to coordinate inter-faith dialog. On occasion the Government has made public facilities available to various religious organizations for religious activities.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such persons to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Societal attitudes between and among differing religious groups in general appear to be amicable and tolerant. The Catholic Church of la Massana, for example, lends its sanctuary twice per month to the Anglican community, so that visiting Anglican clergy can conduct services for the English speaking community. Although those who practice religions other than Roman Catholicism tend to be immigrants and otherwise not integrated fully into the local community, there appears to be little or no obstacle to their practicing their own religions.

There are no significant ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding among adherents of different religions.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. officials discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Both the U.S. Ambassador, resident in Madrid, and the Consul General, resident in Barcelona, have met with Bishop Marti, the leader of the Catholic community. The Consul General met with the Minister of Education to discuss the issue of religious instruction in public schools in March 2000.

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## ARMENIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the law specifies some restrictions on the religious freedom of adherents of faiths other than the Armenian Apostolic Church, which has formal legal status as the national church.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.



Most citizens are free to worship as they please, and there is a generally amicable relationship among religions in society; however, societal attitudes toward minority religions are ambivalent, and antipathy toward Muslims remains a serious problem. Although the law mandates separation of church and state, most officials are at least nominally members of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Proselytizing by other religions is prohibited, and other denominations occasionally report acts of discrimination, usually by mid-level or lower level bureaucrats. Jehovah's Witnesses are not recognized as a registered denomination and face bureaucratic and legal obstacles; however, the group operates in a fairly open manner, despite periodic harassment.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and its policy of promoting human rights, the rule of law, and official transparency and accountability in government functions.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the law specifies some restrictions on the religious freedom of adherents of faiths other than the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Constitution also provides for freedom of conscience, including the right either to believe or to adhere to atheism.

The 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience, amended in 1997, establishes the separation of church and state but grants the Armenian Apostolic Church official status as the national church.

A presidential decree issued in 1993, later superceded by the 1997 law, supplemented the 1991 law and strengthened the position of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The decree enjoins the Council on Religious Affairs to investigate the activities of the representatives of registered religious organizations and to ban missionaries who engage in activities contrary to their status. However, the Council largely has been inactive except for registering religious groups, and no action was taken against missionaries during the period covered by this report. A religious organization that has been refused registration may not publish newspapers or magazines, rent meeting places, broadcast programs on television or radio, or officially sponsor the visas of visitors. No previously registered religious group seeking reregistration under the 1997 law has been denied. However, the Council still denies registration to Jehovah's Witnesses. Several other religious groups are unregistered, specifically the Molokhodny, a branch of the "old Believers," and most Yezidis. According to an official of the State Council on Religious Affairs, the Yezidis, whose congregations are small (numbering in the hundreds), have not sought registration.

Members of faiths other than the Armenian Apostolic Church are subject to some government restrictions. In particular, the 1991 law forbids "proselytizing" (which is undefined in the law) except by the Armenian Apostolic Church, and requires all other religious denominations and organizations to register with the State Council on Religious Affairs. Petitioning organizations must "be free from materialism and of a purely spiritual nature," and must subscribe to a doctrine based on "historically recognized holy scriptures." To qualify, a religious organization must have at least 200 adult members (raised in 1997 from the previous figure of 50). The law bans foreign funding for foreign-based churches. It also mandates that religious organizations other than the Armenian Apostolic Church must seek prior permission from the State Council on Religious Affairs to engage in religious activities in public places, to travel abroad, or to invite foreign guests to the country. As of mid-2000, 50 religious organizations, some created by splits in previously registered groups, were registered with the State Council on Religious Affairs.

As a result of extended negotiations between the Government and the Armenian Apostolic Church, a memorandum was signed in April 2000 that provides for the two sides to negotiate a concordat in time for signing by the 1,700th anniversary celebrations of Armenia's conversion to Christianity, scheduled to take place in 2001. This document is expected to regulate relations between the two bodies, settle disputes over ecclesiastical properties and real estate confiscated during Soviet times, and define the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in such fields as education, morality, and the media.

##### *Religious Demography*

Armenia is an ethnically homogenous country, with around 95 percent of the population classified as ethnic Armenian. Approximately 90 percent of the population nominally belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church, an eastern Christian denomination whose spiritual center is located at the cathedral and monastery of Echmiatsin. Religious observance was discouraged strongly in Soviet times, leading to a sharp decline in the number of active churches and priests, the closure of vir-

tually all monasteries, and the nearly total absence of religious education. As a result, the level of religious practice is relatively low, although many former atheists now identify themselves with the national church. For many citizens, Christian identity is an ethnic marker, with only a loose connection to religious belief. This identification was accentuated by the combat over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988–94, when Armenia and Azerbaijan expelled their respective Azeri Muslim and Armenian Christian minorities, creating huge refugee populations in both countries.

The death in June 1999, of the Armenian Supreme Catholicos-Patriarch Garegin I, the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, required the election of a new church leader. Catholicos-Patriarch Garegin II was elected in October 1999 at Echmiatsin with the participation of Armenian delegates from around the world. The belief was widespread that his predecessor, although well respected, had been imposed by former President Levon Ter-Petrossian; however, the election of his successor took place without visible government interference in the election process. Some adherents of one of the candidates complained that government officials were supporting another candidate; however, President Robert Kocharian announced that they were doing so as private citizens and that the Government formally took no position for or against any candidate.

In addition to the Armenian Apostolic Church, there are comparatively small, but in many cases growing, communities of the following faiths: Yezidi (a Kurdish religious/ethnic group whose practices include elements derived from Zoroastrianism, Islam, and animism), with some 50,000 to 60,000 nominal adherents; Catholic—both Roman Catholic and Mekhitarist (Armenian Uniate), with approximately 180,000; Pentecostal (approximately 25,000); Armenian Evangelical Church (approximately 5,000); Greek Orthodox (approximately 6,000); Baptist (2,000); Jehovah's Witnesses; charismatic Christian; Seventh-Day Adventist; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon); Jewish (500 to 1,000); Muslim; Baha'i; Hare Krishna; and pagan. Yezidis are concentrated mostly in agricultural areas around Mount Aragats, northwest of Yerevan. Catholics and Greek Orthodox are concentrated in the northern region, while most Jews, Mormons, and Baha'is are located in Yerevan. There is a remnant Muslim Kurdish community of a few hundred, many of whose members live in the Abovian region; a small group of Muslims of Azeri descent, mostly along the eastern or northern borders; and approximately 1,000 Muslims in Yerevan, including Kurds, Iranians, and temporary residents from the Middle East.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

During the period covered by this report, most registered religious groups reported no serious consequences from their activity as a result of the laws regarding religion. Although religious personnel require prior government permission to travel abroad, there is in practice no restriction on travel within the country. Although the law prohibits proselytizing, no action has been taken against missionaries; however, the State Council on Religious Affairs allows some less established groups such as the Mormons to have only a limited number of official missionaries present in the country. Such groups also avoid high-profile events.

The ban on foreign funding has not been enforced and is considered unenforceable by the State Council on Religious Affairs. Members of the Council report such limited resources that they can accomplish very little apart from annual reregistration of existing groups. No registered religious groups have been denied reregistration under the amended law. All existing denominations have been reregistered annually except the Hare Krishnas, whose numbers by 1998 had dropped below even the previous membership threshold of 50.

The State Council on Religious Affairs continued to deny registration to Jehovah's Witnesses during the period covered by this report. A regional leader of Jehovah's Witnesses held meetings with the Council on Religious Affairs in September 1999, which he described as "encouraging," but there was no change in the denial of registration. The President's Human Rights Commission declined to intervene, recommending that Jehovah's Witnesses challenge their denial of registration through the courts, as provided by law. Although Jehovah's Witnesses officials claimed that they had filed such a legal challenge, it had not been heard by the courts by mid-2000. An assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses approved slight changes to their charter to meet the country's legal requirements (for example, changing a commitment to "proselytize" into one to "witness") but cautioned that they could not change fundamental articles of faith, for example, opposition to military service. Although it had argued previously that the denial was because the group was opposed to military service, the Council on Religious Affairs stated when it denied a further application in May 2000 that the group could not be registered because they practice "illegal

proselytism.” Discussions between Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Council were continuing as of mid-2000.

According to the law, a religious organization that has been refused registration may not publish newspapers or magazines, rent meeting places, broadcast programs on television or radio, or officially sponsor the visas of visitors. Jehovah’s Witnesses continue to experience difficulty renting meeting places and report that private individuals who are willing to rent them facilities frequently are visited by police and warned not to do so. Lack of official visa sponsorship means that Jehovah’s Witnesses visitors must pay for a tourist visa. When shipped in bulk, Jehovah’s Witnesses publications are seized at the border. Although members of the church supposedly are allowed to bring in small quantities of printed materials for their own use, Jehovah’s Witnesses officials reported that mail from one congregation to another, which they said was meant for internal purposes rather than for proselytizing, was still confiscated by overzealous customs officials. Despite these legal obstacles, Jehovah’s Witnesses continue their missionary work fairly visibly and reported a gain in membership during 1999.

In July 1998, President Kocharian created a human rights commission, which has met with many minority organizations. The Law on Religion states that the State Council on Religious Affairs is to serve as a mediator in conflicts between religious groups. The Council has yet to play this role; for example, according to Jehovah’s Witnesses officials, Council representatives have met with them but have refused to intervene in the group’s efforts to win registration.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Police curtailed a Jehovah’s Witnesses convention held in September 1999 at a privately owned, rented facility outside Yerevan and attempted to disperse the meeting nonviolently, citing an alleged decree by the National Security Council; however, they were unable to produce such a decree, and an official of the Council on Religious Affairs stated that it had not authorized dispersal of the meeting and was not aware of the decree. The police left without dispersing the meeting, but shortly thereafter electrical power to the building was interrupted. Jehovah’s Witnesses ended their meeting prematurely but peacefully. No agency admitted responsibility for the power interruption.

In April 2000, police observed, but did not intervene to halt, physical assaults on members of Jehovah’s Witnesses by local toughs (see Section II).

There are reports that hazing of new conscripts, a problem throughout the former Soviet Union, is more severe for Yezidis and other minorities. Jehovah’s Witnesses are subject to even harsher treatment by military and civilian security officials because their refusal to serve in the military is seen as a threat to national survival.

As of April 30, 2000, nine members of Jehovah’s Witnesses were in prison charged with draft evasion or, if forcibly drafted, with desertion due to refusal to serve, and nine more were free on probation. One more was in detention pending trial, another had been released because of illness, and the President had pardoned a third. A group estimated by an official of Jehovah’s Witnesses as numbering approximately 40 reportedly was in hiding from draft officials. Alternative nonmilitary service is sometimes available for persons willing to act as teachers in remote villages, an option not offered to Jehovah’s Witnesses. At least one member of Jehovah’s Witnesses detained for draft evasion during 1999 indicated in writing his willingness to perform alternative service. A Jehovah’s Witnesses official noted that some forms of alternative service would be problematic for members of his group, due to its creed’s prohibition against participation in some government organs.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners, apart from Jehovah’s Witnesses who were conscientious objectors.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The Armenian Apostolic Church is a member of the World Council of Churches and, despite doctrinal differences, has friendly official relations with many major Christian denominations, including the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and major Protestant churches. Relations between foreign-based religious groups and the dominant Armenian Apostolic Church also are strengthened through cooperation in assistance projects. Various registered

Christian humanitarian organizations are working with the Armenian Apostolic Church to distribute humanitarian assistance and educational religious materials. In connection with the 1700th anniversary of Armenian Christianity in September 2001, the office of the Catholicos/Patriarch has announced that world religious leaders, including Pope John Paul II and the Patriarch of Moscow, will be invited to attend the dedication of a new Cathedral of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Yerevan.

Although these activities are contributing to mutual understanding, they take place in an undercurrent of competition. After 70 years of Soviet rule, the Armenian Apostolic Church has neither the trained priests nor the material resources available to fill immediately the spiritual void created by the demise of Communist ideology. Newer religious organizations are viewed with suspicion, and foreign-based denominations feel the need to operate cautiously due to fear of being perceived as a threat by the Armenian Apostolic Church. Upon his election in October 1999, one of the first actions of Catholicos-Patriarch Garegin II (formerly Archbishop of Yerevan) was to create a department for outreach to other Christian denominations.

Societal attitudes toward minority religions are ambivalent. Many Armenians are not religiously observant, but the link between religion and Armenian ethnicity is strong. As a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, most of the Muslim population was forced to leave the country. Antipathy to Muslims remains a problem, and the few Muslims who remain in the country keep a low profile, despite generally amicable relations between the Government and Iran. There is no mosque that operates formally, although Yerevan's one surviving 18th century mosque—newly restored with Iranian funding—is open for prayers on a tenuous legal basis.

There were some instances of societal violence against minority religious groups during the period covered by this report. Yezidi children on occasion report hazing by teachers and classmates. In April 2000, Jehovah's Witnesses returning from a religious service in Yerevan reported being abused verbally and in some cases assaulted physically by local toughs while police observed but did not intervene. There are reports of increasingly unfavorable attitudes towards Jehovah's Witnesses among ordinary citizens, both because they are seen as "unpatriotic" for refusing military service and because of a widespread but unsubstantiated belief that they pay money to persons who are extremely poor in exchange for their conversions. The press reported a number of complaints lodged by citizens against Jehovah's Witnesses for alleged illegal proselytizing. They are the target of religious tracts and hostile preaching by some Armenian Apostolic Church clerics.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government is engaged actively in promoting freedom of religion. The U.S. Ambassador and embassy officials maintain close contact with the Catholicosate at Echmiatsin and with leaders of other major religious and ecumenical groups. In September 1999, Embassy officials met with the military prosecutor to discuss, among other topics, hazing of minority conscripts and the status of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Embassy also maintains regular contact with traveling regional representatives of foreign-based religious groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and raises their concerns with government officials.

In Washington, State Department officials from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor met with representatives of the Armenian government to discuss human rights, including religious freedom.

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## AUSTRIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious groups. However, there is widespread societal mistrust and discrimination against members of some nonrecognized religious groups, particularly those referred to as "sects." The installation of a new right-of-center coalition government in February 2000 led to increased concern among members of minority religions that the atmosphere of tolerance in the country was deteriorating.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The status of religious organizations is governed by the 1874 Law on Recognition of Churches and by a January 1998 law that establishes the status of "confessional communities." Religious organizations may be divided into three different legal categories (listed in descending order of status): officially recognized religious societies, religious confessional communities, and associations.

Religious recognition under the 1874 law has wide ranging implications, e.g., the authority to participate in the statecollected religious taxation program, to engage in religious education, and to import religious workers to act as ministers, missionaries, or teachers. Under the 1874 law, religious societies have "public corporation" status. This status permits religious societies to engage in a number of public or quasi-public activities that are denied to other religious organizations. The Constitution singles out religious societies for special recognition. State subsidies for religious teachers (at both public and private schools) constitute one of the benefits provided to religious societies that is not granted to other religious organizations.

Previously, some nonrecognized religious groups were able to organize as legal entities or associations, although this route has not been available universally. Some groups even have done so while applying for recognition as religious communities under the 1874 law. Many such applications for recognition were not handled expeditiously by the Ministry of Education and Culture; in some cases, years passed before a decision was made.

Following years of bureaucratic delay and an administrative court order instructing the Ministry of Education to render a decision, in 1997 the Ministry denied the request for recognition of Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses appealed this decision to the Constitutional Court. In a decision issued in March 1998, the Constitutional Court voided the Education Ministry's decision on Jehovah's Witnesses based on technical grounds and ordered a new decision in accordance with the January 1998 law on the Status of Confessional Communities. In July 1998, Jehovah's Witnesses received the status of a confessional community. According to the January 1998 law, the group is now subject to a 10-year observation period before they are eligible for recognition.

When the new law on the status of religious confessional communities came into effect in January 1998, there were only 12 recognized religious societies. Although the new law allowed these 12 religious societies to retain their status, it imposed new criteria on other churches that seek to achieve the status, including a 10-year observation period between the time of the application and the time it is granted.

The January 1998 law allows nonrecognized religious groups to seek official status as "confessional communities" without the fiscal and educational privileges available to recognized religions. To apply groups must have 300 members and submit to the Government their written statutes describing the goals, rights, and obligations of members; membership regulations; officials; and financing. Groups also must submit a written version of their religious doctrine, which must differ from that of any existing religion recognized under the 1874 law or registered under the new law, for a determination that their basic beliefs do not violate public security, public order, health and morals, or the rights and freedoms of citizens. The new law also sets out additional criteria for eventual recognition according to the 1874 law, such as a 20-year period of existence (at least 10 of which must be as a group organized as a confessional community under the new law) and membership equaling at least two one-thousandths of the country's population. Many religious groups and independent congregations do not meet the 300-member threshold for registration under the new law. Only Jehovah's Witnesses currently meet the higher membership requirement for recognition under the 1874 law.

Religious confessional communities, once they are recognized officially as such by the Government, have juridical standing, which permits them to engage in such activities as purchasing real estate in their own names, contracting for goods and services, and other activities. The category of religious confessional community did not exist prior to the adoption of the 1998 Law on the Status of Religious Confessional Communities. A religious organization that seeks to obtain this new status is subject to a 6-month waiting period from the time of application to the Ministry of Education and Culture. According to the Ministry, as of April 1999 only 11 organizations had applied for the status of religious confessional community. Of the 11, 9 were granted the new status including, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, and Seventh-Day Adventists. The Church of Scientology and the Hindu Mandir Association withdrew their applications. The Hindu Mandir Association re-

applied under the name Hindu Religious Community. The Ministry rejected the application of the Sahaja Yoga group.

The nine religious groups that have constituted themselves as confessional communities according to the 1998 law are: Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baha'i Faith, the Baptists, the Evangelical Alliance, the Movement for Religious Renewal, the Pentecostals, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Coptic-Orthodox Church, and the Hindu Religious Community.

After the Education Ministry granted Jehovah's Witnesses the status of a confessional community, the group immediately in 1998 requested that it be recognized as a religious group under the 1874 law. The Education Ministry denied the application on the basis that, as a confessional community, Jehovah's Witnesses would need to submit to the required 10-year observation period. The group has appealed this decision to the Constitutional Court, arguing that a 10-year observation period is unconstitutional. A decision is expected in 2000.

Proponents of the law describe it as an opportunity for religious groups to become registered officially as religious organizations, providing them with a government "quality seal." However, numerous religious groups not recognized by the State, as well as some religious law experts dismiss the purported benefits of obtaining status under the new law and have complained that the new law's additional criteria for recognition under the 1874 law obstruct claims to recognition and formalize a second class status for nonrecognized groups. Some experts have questioned the new law's constitutionality.

Religious associations that do not qualify for either religious society or confessional community status may apply to become associations, under the 1951 Law on Associations. Associations are corporations under private law and have many of the same rights as confessional communities, including the right to purchase real estate.

The Government provides subsidies to private schools run by any of the 12 officially recognized religions.

#### *Religious Demography*

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, as of August 2000, the memberships of the 12 officially recognized religions are as follows: Roman Catholic Church—78.14 percent; Lutheran Church (Augsburger and Helvetic Confessions)—5 percent; Islamic community—2.04 percent; Old Catholic Church—0.24 percent; Jewish community—0.09 percent; Eastern Orthodox (Russian, Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian)—1.5 percent; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)—0.2 percent; New Apostolic Church—0.2 percent; Syrian Orthodox Church—under 0.1 percent; Armenian-Apostolic Church—under 0.1 percent; Methodist Church of Austria—under 0.1 percent; Buddhist community—under 0.1 percent. Approximately 2 percent of the population belong to nonrecognized "other faiths," while 8.64 percent consider themselves atheists. Four percent did not indicate a religious affiliation. Only about 17 percent of Roman Catholics actively participate in formal religious services. According to the Catholic Church, 44,359 Catholics left the Church in 1999, an increase of 14 percent over the previous year.

The provinces of Carinthia and Burgenland have somewhat higher percentages of Protestants than the national average, as the Counter-Reformation was less successful in those areas. The number of Muslims is higher than the national average in Vienna and the province of Vorarlberg, due to the higher share of guestworkers from Turkey in these provinces.

The vast majority of groups termed "sects" by the Government are small organizations, having under 100 members. Among the larger groups are the Church of Scientology, with between 5,000 and 10,000 members, and the Unification Church, with approximately 700 adherents throughout the country. Other groups found in the country include: Brahma Kumaris, Divine Light Mission, Divine Light Center, Eckankar, Hare Krishna, the Holosophic community, the Osho movement, Sahaja Yoga, Sai Baba, Sri Chinmoy, Transcendental Meditation, Landmark Education, the Center for Experimental Society Formation, Fiat Lux, Universal Life, and the Family.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government continued its information campaign against religious sects considered potentially harmful to the interests of individuals and society. In September 1999, the Ministry for Social Security and Generations issued a new edition of a controversial brochure that described numerous nonrecognized religious groups in negative terms, which many of the groups deemed offensive. This brochure includes information on Jehovah's Witnesses, despite its status as a confessional community. On April 6, 2000, the new Minister for Social Security and Generations, Elisabeth Sickl, a Freedom Party (FPÖ) member, announced plans to support the training of

“specialists” among teachers and youth leaders in order to sensitize them to the dangers posed by some nonrecognized religious groups to the young. She also pledged to include representatives from provincial governments in an interministerial working group to decide on measures to “protect citizens from the damaging influence of sects, cults, and esoteric movements.” These statements were interpreted in some circles as evidence that the rightwing Freedom Party’s participation in government may strengthen efforts to curb the role of nonrecognized religious groups. The Federal Office on Sects continues to collect and distribute information on organizations considered sects. Under the law, this office has independent status, but its head is appointed and supervised by the Minister for Social Security and Generations.

In April 1999, the conservative Austrian People’s Party (OeVP) convention formally accepted a decision made by the party’s executive board in 1997 that party membership is incompatible with membership in a sect.

With the installation in February 2000 of a new right-of-center coalition government made up of the OeVP and the FPÖ, there was increased concern among members of minority religions that the general atmosphere of tolerance in the country is deteriorating. The former head of the Freedom Party, Jörg Haider, repeatedly has made statements deemed intolerant and anti-Semitic. While he has expressed regret for any offense caused by his statements, there is a widespread belief that Haider and the Freedom Party have contributed to a climate of intolerance.

There were no reports of complaints by members of the Unification Church of discrimination and harassment by the police and the public during the period covered by this report.

Although in the past nonrecognized religious groups have had problems obtaining resident permits for foreign religious workers, administrative procedures adopted in 1997 have addressed this problem in part. The Austrian Evangelical Alliance, the umbrella organization for nonrecognized Christian organizations, has reported no significant problems in obtaining visas for religious workers. While visas for religious workers of recognized religions are not subject to a numerical quota, visas for religious workers who are members of nonrecognized religions do have a numerical cap; however, this appears to be sufficient to meet current demand.

In October 1999, the Constitutional Court ruled that denying prisoners who are members of Jehovah’s Witnesses access to pastoral care because the organization was not a recognized religious society was a violation of the Constitution’s provisions on religious freedom. The verdict stressed that pastoral care should be available to any person of any religious belief. Following this verdict, the Justice Ministry issued a decree on February 28, 2000, in which it instructed prisons to make pastoral care available to prisoners who are members of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

It remains unclear how the Constitutional Court verdict affects prisoners of other religious confessions, in particular those who are members of neither a recognized religious society nor a confessional community. Access of the clergy of nonrecognized religious societies to hospitals and the military chaplaincy continue to be an area of concern.

The Government offers funding for religious instruction in public schools and churches for children belonging to any of the 12 officially recognized religions. A minimum of three children is required to form a class. In some cases, officially recognized religions decide that the administrative cost of providing religious instruction is too great to warrant providing such courses in all schools. Unless students age 14 and over (or their parents for children under age 14) formally withdraw from religious instruction (if offered in their religion) at the beginning of the academic year, attendance is mandatory.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the 12 officially recognized religious groups are generally amicable. Fourteen Christian churches, among them the Roman Catholic Church, various Protestant confessions, and eight Orthodox and old-oriental churches are engaged in a dialog in the framework of the so-called “Ecumenical Council of Austrian Churches.” The Baptists and the Salvation Army have observer status in the Coun-

cil. The international Catholic organization "Pro Oriente," which promotes a dialog with the Orthodox churches, also is active in the country.

The Austrian Roman Catholic Church traditionally has been active in fostering amicable relations and promoting a dialog among the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic communities. The international Catholic group "Pax Christi," which pursues efforts toward international interreligious understanding with projects involving Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, has an Austrian chapter.

There were no reports of violence or vigilante action against members of religious minorities. However, there is widespread societal mistrust and discrimination against members of some nonrecognized religious groups, particularly those considered to be sects. Austrians perceive such groups as exploiting the vulnerable for monetary gain, recruiting and brainwashing youth, promoting anti-democratic ideologies, and denying the legitimacy of government authority. Societal discrimination of sects is, at least in part, fostered by the Government (see Section I).

In June 2000, the pastor of the English-speaking United Methodist Church of Austria stated that there had been several instances of discrimination against the Methodist Church because of the inaccurate belief that it was not a recognized religion, and therefore qualified as a "sect." Members of the Methodist Church have been denied access to prisoners in some jails and have had problems reserving hotels for religious retreats.

A number of recent incidents indicate that sensitivity to Scientology in the country remains high. In November 1999 and June 2000, a U.S. singer experienced harassment by an anti-Scientology group at two of his performances. The American previously had supported the Church of Scientology at events; however since 1998 he no longer publicly has supported the organization. Police authorities fined the demonstrators and offered police protection for the singer's next appearances. In October 1999, Austrian Telekom, the largest telephone company in the country, transferred a computer specialist from a sensitive position in an emergency-phone-line coordination office to a comparable, nonsensitive position. The company became concerned about the employee's access to sensitive information following media reports that he was a high-ranking Scientologist.

The head of the Lutheran Church in Burgenland, Gertrude Knoll, who spoke out against intolerance and xenophobia at a February 19, 2000 political demonstration, was subjected to hate mail and threats against herself and her family. A petition also was organized, calling for her removal from office. Some citizens, including members of the Burgenland Lutheran Church, considered it inappropriate for a church leader to speak out on political issues. It was widely assumed, but never proven, that FPO supporters were behind the hate campaign.

The leader of the country's Jewish community reported that persons within the community who had taken a stand against racism and xenophobia (including himself) had been subjected to verbal and written threats. The FPO's repeated remarks concerning National Socialism reportedly led some members of the Jewish community to consider leaving the country.

According to the Interior Ministry's 1999 annual report on rightwing extremism, there was an increase in the number of complaints about anti-Semitic incidents. Compared with 1998, the number of complaints increased by 87.5 percent, from 8 to 15.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy follows religious developments and reports on them regularly. The Embassy monitors the Government's adherence to commitments to religious tolerance and freedom of expression as part of its evaluation of the new Government's policies and its efforts to encourage the Government to adhere to the commitments to diversity and freedom of expression outlined in the preamble of the new Government's program.

The U.S. Ambassador regularly meets with religious and political leaders to reinforce the U.S. Government's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance. The Ambassador and other members of the Embassy have met repeatedly with Ariel Muzicant and Gertrude Knoll regarding the threats against them and their concerns about the new Government. Following these threats, the Ambassador met with Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel to convey the concerns of the U.S. Government. The Ambassador also raised concerns about Minister Sickl's intentions to enhance the role of the Office on Sects. The Deputy Chief of Mission and members of the political section maintain strong contacts with political leaders and members of the various religious communities. The Embassy's Public Affairs Office highlights issues involving religious freedom and tolerance in the majority of its programs. The Embassy consistently urged the Government to respect its commitments to religious freedom



and discussed the concerns of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) and religious communities regarding the Government's policies towards religion.

The Ambassador regularly hosts events in support of tolerance and pluralism. In May 2000, the Ambassador participated in the annual commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust at the Matthausen concentration camp. In April 2000, the Ambassador hosted an event at her residence featuring U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos, who is a Holocaust survivor. This event included members of the Government, religious leaders, and other opinion makers. It focused on religious and racial tolerance, including a screening of a documentary on Holocaust survivors. In February 2000, the Ambassador hosted a benefit conference to raise money for the renovation of St. Stephen's Cathedral. She utilized the event to focus on the issues of ecumenical partnerships to combat intolerance. Following a December 1999 unveiling of a statue symbolizing tolerance, the Ambassador hosted a reception for government officials and representatives from NGO's concerned with minorities, tolerance, and issues of genocide prevention.

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## AZERBAIJAN

The Constitution provides that persons of all faiths may choose and practice their religion without restrictions, and the Government generally respected these rights for most citizens throughout the period covered by this report; however, until late in 1999, the Government frequently used clauses in the Law on Religious Freedom and other laws to restrict religious activity by foreigners and nontraditional religious groups, particularly in the fall of 1999, when police and security officials disrupted a number of services, detained ministers, and ordered foreigners deported. Although the national Government generally respects legal provisions for religious freedom in practice, the acting Chairman of the Religious Affairs Department and some other mid- and lower-level and local government officials continued to restrict religious activity by some foreign and local nontraditional groups. There were some reports that indicated that in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region occupied by Armenian forces and forces of the self-styled "Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh" (which is not recognized by any government but over which the Azerbaijani central Government does not exercise control) the Armenian Apostolic Church enjoys at least quasi-official status and that the practice of some other religious faiths is discouraged.

There was a marked improvement in the Government's respect for religious freedom following President Heydar Aliyev's November 1999 public announcement of his commitment to religious freedom. The national Government subsequently redressed a number of outstanding grievances and generally respected religious freedom during the remainder of the period covered by this report. Following President Aliyev's November 1999 announcement, a number of groups with long-pending registration applications were registered. However the Religious Affairs Department, the government office charged with implementing the country's laws on religion, continued to delay selectively the registration of a few groups and to intervene selectively in the importation of religious literature.

Societal attitudes toward religion generally continued to be marked by tolerance for different religious groups; however, some groups continued to voice suspicion of non-traditional faiths, and there is widespread popular hostility towards groups that proselytize (largely evangelical Christians, but also Muslim missionary groups), and towards Muslims who convert to other faiths. Ethnic and territorial conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians over the Nagorno-Karabakh region limits the religious freedom of each in the territory controlled by the other.

The U.S. Government actively encouraged the authorities to address violations of religious freedom, particularly after the fall 1999 crackdown. Embassy officials met with several ministerial level officials in an effort to call the Government's attention to violations of constitutional standards. A U.S. State Department official from the Office of International Religious Freedom visited Baku to discuss the problems with religious groups and government officials. In November the Ambassador met with President Aliyev to raise the problems and deliver letters of concern from U.S. Congressmen. President Aliyev responded by ordering his Government to adhere to constitutional standards and redress the problems. Following President Aliyev's public commitment to observe constitutional standards in November 1999, most of the reported problems were addressed. After November, the Embassy continued to work with officials to address violations of religious freedom, particularly those committed by the Religious Affairs Department.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides that persons of all faiths may choose and practice their religion without restrictions, and the Government generally respected these rights for most citizens throughout the period covered by this report; however, until late in 1999, the Government frequently used clauses in the Law on Religious Freedom and other laws to restrict religious activity by foreigners and nontraditional religious groups, particularly in the fall of 1999, when police and security officials disrupted a number of services, detained and imprisoned ministers, and ordered foreigners deported. Although the national Government generally respects legal provisions for religious freedom in practice, the acting Chairman of the Religious Affairs Department and some other mid- and lower-level and local government officials continued to restrict religious activity by some foreign and nontraditional groups. Under the Law on Religious Freedom, each person has the right to choose and change his or her own religious affiliation, including atheism, to join or form the religious group of his choice, and to practice his or her religion. The State is expressly forbidden from interfering in the religious activities of any individual or group; however there are exceptions, including cases where the activity of a religious group "threatens public order and stability." There were some reports that indicated that the Armenian Apostolic Church enjoys at least quasi-official status in Nagorno-Karabakh, and that the practice of some other religious faiths is discouraged.

There are a number of legal provisions that enable the Government to regulate religious activity, including a requirement in the Law on Religion that all religious organizations be registered by the Government in order to function legally. This is in principle done by obtaining approval from the Department of Religious Affairs, which is subordinated directly to the Council of Ministers, and then applying for formal registration with the Ministry of Justice. Registration, which is regarded by many groups as burdensome, enables a religious organization to maintain a bank account, legally rent property, and generally to act as a legal entity. Lack of registration makes it harder, but not impossible, for a religious group to function. Unregistered groups continued to operate. Since President Aliyev expressed his commitment to religious freedom in November 1999, there has been no repetition of earlier reports that participants in unregistered groups were subject to arrest, fines, and—in the cases of foreigners—deportation. In contrast to the previous situation, there were no reports of allegations during the period covered by this report that officials responsible for registration took bribes in order to facilitate registration. Religious groups are permitted to appeal registration denials to the courts. The Law on Religious Freedom also subordinates all Islamic religious organizations to the Azerbaijan-based Spiritual Directorate of Caucasus Muslims.

Press reports indicate that in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region, a predominantly ethnic Armenian area over which the authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan have no effective control, the Armenian Apostolic Church enjoys a special status. Courses in religion are mandatory in Karabakh schools and local officials frequently underline their commitment to supporting the oldest Armenian national institution. This status also means serious restrictions on the activities of other confessions, mostly various Christian sects. The highly charged military atmosphere surrounding the region reportedly has given rise in particular to hostility toward Jehovah's Witnesses, whose beliefs prohibit the bearing of arms.

*Religious Demography*

The population is approximately 90 percent Muslim, 3 percent Christian, and less than 1 percent Jewish. The rest of the population adheres to other faiths or consists of nonbelievers. Among the Muslim majority, religious observance is minimal, and Muslim identity tends to be more cultural and ethnic than religious. The Muslim population is approximately 70 percent Shi'a and 30 percent Sunni, but differences do not appear to be sharply defined, and those Shi'a and Sunni Muslims who are observant freely intermingle on religious occasions. The vast majority of the country's Christians are Russian Orthodox, whose identity, like that of the Muslims, tends to be as much cultural and ethnic as religious. They are concentrated in the urban areas of Baku and Sumgait. Most of the country's Jews belong to one of two groups: "Mountain" Jews—descendants of Jews given religious asylum in the northern part of the country more than 2,000 years ago—number about 18,000; and "European"

Jews—descendants of Jews who migrated to Baku during Azerbaijan's time as a Russian and Soviet colony—number about 3,000. These four groups (Shi'a, Sunni, Russian Orthodox, and Jewish) are considered "traditional" religious groups. There

also have been small congregations of Evangelical Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, and Baha'is in Baku for over 100 years.

In the last 10 years, a number of new religious groups that are considered "foreign" or "nontraditional" have begun activity throughout the country. These include "Wahhabist" Muslims, Pentecostals, evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Hare Krishnas. Most observers agree that membership in these groups, while growing, is still small and currently estimate the total number of adherents for all these groups at fewer than 5,000.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Despite the general prohibition on state interference in the religious activities of individuals or groups, there are exceptions. These include areas such as registration of religious groups and oversight of the import and production of religious literature. The Law on Religious Freedom permits the production and dissemination of religious literature only with the approval of the Department of Religious Affairs and with the agreement of local government authorities. Although some mid- and low-level officials express views about the need to "protect traditional Azerbaijani values and mores," particularly where proselytizing by foreign-based groups is concerned, these views contradict President Aliyev's commitment to religious freedom.

In most cases the Government adheres to constitutional provisions for religious freedom, however, officials of the Religious Affairs Department, the government office charged with implementing the country's laws on religion, and local officials acted in some instances to restrict religious activity by foreign and nontraditional religious groups. A number of religious groups complained that the Religious Affairs Department's Acting Chairman, Mustafa Ibrahimov, delayed their registration and refused to release religious literature they had imported. After long delays and intervention by the President's office, several groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Nehemiah, the Cathedral of Praise, and the Azerbaijani Baptists, were registered. However, several other groups continued to report that they had not been registered, despite intervention by the President's office. As of mid-2000, Living Stones, New Life, and Baptist congregations from the towns of Aliabad, Sumgait, and Neftchala were not registered. In addition, a citizen reported that Ibrahimov refused to release religious videos that she had imported in February 2000. In March 2000, 132 pounds of books were confiscated from a Baptist returning home from Russia; however, they subsequently were released for entry. Other groups, including Baha'i and Jewish groups, reported no problems importing religious literature.

Prior to November 1999, the Department for Religious Affairs used the provision of the Law on Foreigners and Stateless Persons that prohibits religious "propaganda" (i.e., proselytizing) by foreigners, to harass foreign missionaries and religious figures. In September 1999, nine foreigners were arrested and sentenced to deportation under this provision. However, in November 1999, the Supreme Court overturned these sentences, ruling that they violated constitutional provisions for religious freedom.

Press reports indicated that three religious groups in Baku were seeking the return of places of worship seized during the Soviet period. These were the city's European (Ashkenazi) synagogue, the Lutheran church and a Baptist church. They report that government authorities are resisting their return. The Baha'is reportedly are no longer seeking the return of their center, now used as a kindergarten.

There were instances in early 2000 in which groups were harassed for disseminating religious materials. Since their registration in December 1999, Jehovah's Witnesses have been able to hold large gatherings for the first time in 3 years. However, on April 1, 2000, in what they regard as an isolated incident, a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses was dispersed by police who claimed that they lacked permission from the mayor's office. The manager of the venue has since declined to permit them to use it again.

There were no repetitions during the period covered by this report of earlier instances in which government officials or those allied with the Government had used veiled anti-Semitic comments against perceived opponents for politically motivated reasons.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Government officials committed a number of abuses prior to November 1999. In some instances, these abuses appeared to reflect the strong popular prejudice against ethnic Azerbaijanis who have converted to Christianity and other religions. For example, an ethnic Azerbaijani was subjected to administrative fines by local officials in Baku in July 1999 for possessing Christian literature, and another ethnic Azerbaijani reported that he was arrested, beaten, and imprisoned in August 1999

for changing his religious affiliation and becoming a member of Jehovah's Witnesses. In August and September, police and security officials disrupted services at Baku Baptist, Lutheran, and Pentecostal churches on the grounds that these groups (the first two of whom were registered legally) were engaged in illegal activity. Several congregants were detained and two Azerbaijani pastors Sari Mirzoyev and Yahya Mamedov, pastors in the Baku Baptist church, were imprisoned for 2 weeks. Nine foreigners were tried and ordered deported for engaging in "religious propaganda."

In September 1999, at the instigation of a local security official, management at a state factory near Baku subjected six employees to public humiliation and then fired them because they had become members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Following President Aliyev's November reaffirmation of religious freedom, the employees were reinstated with back pay and the deportation orders against the foreigners were overturned. There have been no further reported problems involving harassment of religious groups by police or security officials.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

President Aliyev's public commitment to religious freedom in November 1999 led to a significant improvement in the Government's respect for religious freedom. Outstanding complaints resulting from police harassment of religious services, legal action against Christian clerics and foreigners attending religious services, and quasi-governmental harassment of persons who convert to "nontraditional" religions were resolved. There were no further reports of such abuses.

Intervention by the President's office resolved the problems in a number of instances, and groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Nehemiah, and the Cathedral of Praise were registered, as was the Love Baptist Community, whose Pastors Sari Mirzoev and Yahya Mamdeov were imprisoned earlier. Nevertheless, the Religious Affairs Department continues to delay registration of some new religious groups.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In recent years, evangelical activity on behalf of religious faiths new to the country has weakened the country's earlier tradition of religious tolerance that survived many decades of Communist propaganda against all religion. This change is particularly apparent in the popular concern about conversion of ethnic Azerbaijanis that convert to non-Muslim faiths considered alien to Azerbaijani tradition.

Opposition to proselytizing within the population thus far has been limited to verbal criticism, which also occasionally is reflected in the media and the speeches of some political figures. For example, Islamic Party of Azerbaijan Supreme Council member Muzaffar Jebraizade called on the President in January 2000 to ban foreign missionary proselytizing, and Yusuf Cunaydin, the Deputy Chairman of the progovernment Motherland Party, on February 16 reportedly said that various minority religious groups are carrying out "sabotage against Azerbaijan," and urged that the Government create a special ministry for national relations and religions. Other speakers at a February 1999 conference on religious confessions joined in this recommendation. Opposition to proselytizing is focused largely against evangelical Christian and other "western" or nontraditional religious groups, although there is also hostility toward "foreign" (mostly Iranian and "Wahhabist") Muslim missionary activity, which in part is viewed as seeking to spread political Islam and thus a threat to stability and civil peace. There are regular reports of prejudice against ethnic Azerbaijanis who convert to Christianity. Such persons routinely face accusations that they are betraying their ethnic identity.

Popular hostility between Armenians and Azeris, intensified by the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, remains intense. In those portions of Azerbaijan controlled by ethnic Armenians, all ethnic Azerbaijanis have fled and those mosques that have not been destroyed are not functioning. Animosity toward the Armenian population elsewhere in Azerbaijan forced most Armenians to depart, and all Armenian churches, many of which were damaged in ethnic riots that took place over a decade ago, remain closed. As a consequence, the estimated 10,000 to 30,000 Armenians who remain in Azerbaijan are unable to attend their traditional places of worship.

Prominent members of the Jewish community report that there are no societal restrictions on their freedom to worship.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government worked closely with the Government to encourage respect for religious freedom throughout the period covered by this report. The U.S. Embassy maintained regular contact with a wide variety of religious groups. Embassy involvement was particularly heavy in the fall, in response to a crackdown on religious activity by government officials. When police broke up a Baku Baptist service and detained 60 congregants on September 5, embassy officials were called by local worshippers to meet with detainees, police, and security officials at the police station. Throughout the ensuing week, embassy officers attended court hearings for two Azerbaijani pastors and eight foreigners arrested during the police raid. Other religious groups quickly came forward to report similar incidents of harassment, and the Embassy carefully followed up each report with those groups and with the Government. Over the ensuing months, the Ambassador met with the Ministers of Interior, Justice, and National Security, as well as the Prosecutor General, to express concerns over this pattern of incidents, characterizing them as violations of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards of religious freedom as well as of the Constitution.

Throughout fall 1999, the Embassy maintained regular contact with responsible government officials and local religious groups to monitor the situation and promote a resolution consistent with the Constitution's standards of religious freedom. The U.S. State Department sent an official from the International Office of Religious Freedom in October to express U.S. concern to the Government and to the local groups affected. On November 3, 1999, the Ambassador personally delivered a letter from several congressmen to President Aliyev expressing concern over the incidents. On November 8, President Aliyev publicly reiterated his country's full commitment to constitutional and OSCE standards of religious freedom, and ordered his government to resolve immediately all reported problems. The problems raised by the Embassy were addressed fully (see Section I).

The U.S. Government also worked on a regular basis with religious groups and the President's office to resolve problems caused by the Religious Affairs Department in the areas of registration of religious groups and importation of religious literature (see Section I). That cooperation continued throughout the period covered by this report. In mid-2000, the Embassy was continuing to work on the delayed registrations and the problem of imported religious literature (see Section I).

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## BELARUS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. President Alexandr Lukashenko has pursued a deliberate policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church as the country's main religion and the Government has increased harassment of some nontraditional or minority religions. Some of these, including many Protestant denominations, the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (BOAC), and some eastern religions, repeatedly have been denied registration by the Government. Without registration, many of these groups find it difficult, if not impossible, to rent or purchase property to conduct religious services. Despite continued harassment, minority faiths sometimes have been able to function if they maintain a low profile.

The status of the freedom of religion continued to worsen during the period covered by this report. The Government continued to enforce a 1995 Cabinet of Ministers decree that controls religious workers, in an attempt to protect orthodoxy and curtail the growth of evangelical religions. Most notably, in March 2000 the Government arrested Catholic priest Zbigniew Karoljak, a Polish national who has been ministering in the country for 10 years, for alleged violations of visa regulations and ordered him to depart the country by May 20. Karoljak departed the country in early June, 2000. Some Protestant denominations have been threatened with judicial action by the Government for allowing foreigners to preach in their churches.

After over 70 years of Communism, society remains largely secular in its orientation. There are, for the most part, amicable relations among registered, so-called traditional, religious communities. However, societal anti-Semitism persists, and sentiment critical of minority faiths is rising. The Government has done little to counter the spread of anti-Semitic literature. In May 2000, the Minsk City Court refused to hear an appeal brought by Jewish organizations to stop the publishing and sale of the book "War According to Mean Laws," which, among other anti-Semitic writings, included the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and blamed Jews for

societal and economic problems in the country. Articles critical of minority faiths also have appeared in state-owned newspapers.

The U.S. Government raised problems of religious freedom with the Government in the context of frequent demarches on the overall poor human rights situation in the country and in specific cases when warranted.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. Although Article 16 of the 1996 amended Constitution, which resulted from an illegal referendum used by Lukashenko to broaden his powers, reaffirms the equality of religions and denominations before the law, it also contains restrictive language that stipulates that cooperation between the State and religious organizations "is regulated with regard for their influence on the formation of spiritual, cultural, and country traditions of the Belarusian people."

Since his election as the country's president in July 1994, Lukashenko has pursued a deliberate policy of favoring the Orthodox Church as the country's chief religion and harassing other non-Orthodox religions. The Government and the President encourage a greater role for the Orthodox Church, largely as part of an overall strategy to strengthen Slavic unity in the region and promote greater political unification between Belarus and Russia. The President grants the Orthodox Church special financial advantages that other denominations do not enjoy and has declared the preservation and development of Orthodox Christianity a "moral necessity." On April 30, 2000, Lukashenko said on state radio that "nobody will disturb our Orthodoxy" and pledged that the State "will do everything for the Church to be a pillar of support for our State in the future." In December 1999, Lukashenko said that politicians and the Head of State bear responsibility for preserving Christian values, for maintaining religious peace in society, and for harmonious cooperation between the State and the Church. Lukashenko also said that the Church should be more active in promoting the unity of Slavic nations because Slavic integration is in the interests of both the State and the Church. In 1998 Lukashenko pledged state assistance to the Orthodox Church and stressed that Orthodoxy would remain the "main religion."

The Government's State Committee on Religious and National Affairs (SCRNA), which was established in January 1997, appears to categorize religions and denominations. Some are viewed as "traditional," including Russian Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam (as practiced by a small community of ethnic Tatars with roots in the country dating back to the 11th century); some are viewed as "non-traditional," including some Protestant and other faiths; and some are viewed as "sects," including Eastern religions and other faiths. The authorities deny permission to register legally at the national level to some faiths considered to be nontraditional, and to all considered to be sects. The Government states that it denies some groups permission to register as religious organizations because their activities "run counter to the Constitution." Without official registration, religious faiths have great difficulty renting or purchasing property in which to establish places of worship, or in openly training clergy. Some religious groups that have not been able to register have had services or religious meetings, which were being conducted peacefully in private homes, disrupted by police.

While all registered religious organizations enjoy tax-exempt status, any government subsidies appear limited principally to the Orthodox Church.

##### *Religious Demography*

Seven decades of religious repression under the Soviet regime have resulted in a culture that is secular in orientation. According to one opinion poll taken during 1998, fewer than half of the population believe in God. Nonetheless, between 60 and 80 percent identify for cultural or historical reasons with the Russian Orthodox Church. The SCRNA indicates that about 80 percent of all believers belong to this Church.

Belarus was designated an Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1989, thereby creating the Belarusian Orthodox Church. Patriarchal Exarch Filaret celebrated his 20th anniversary as head of the Orthodox community on October 24, 1998. Under Filaret's leadership, the number of Orthodox parishes scattered throughout the country has grown from approximately 787 to 1,081 during the last 5 years.

During a religious conference held in Minsk on April 22, 1999, Filaret stated that the Orthodox Church does not seek the role of interconfessional leader or to become a state-run church. However, he stressed that the Orthodox Church would cooperate

only with religious faiths that have “historical roots” in the country. Filaret also remarked that he was against the “invasion of those foreign religions that corrupt souls.”

Situated between Poland and Russia, Belarus historically has been an area of interaction, as well as competition and conflict, between Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Between 8 and 20 percent of the country’s population (the second largest religious grouping) are estimated to be either practicing Roman Catholics or to identify themselves with the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Kazmierz Swiatek, Archbishop of the Minsk-Mogilev Archdiocese, heads the approximately 400 Roman Catholic parishes.

As a result of its revival during the post-Soviet period, the Roman Catholic Church has experienced a shortage of qualified native clergy. The Church reportedly has had difficulty sometimes getting permission from government authorities to bring in a sufficient number of foreign religious workers, mostly from Poland, to make up for the shortage. According to the independent media, the Lukashenko Government has allowed the Catholic Church to open a seminary and indicated that, in light of this development, foreign priests no longer would be allowed to work in the country; however, this change may not be enforced at the local level, and at least some foreign priests still are allowed to work in the country. Bishops must receive permission from the SCRNA before transferring a foreign priest to another parish.

Roman Catholics traditionally have been associated with the country’s ethnic Polish community, which currently numbers at least 400,000 persons. Although Roman Catholic parishes can be found throughout the country, most Roman Catholics reside in areas located in the west, near the border with Poland. Sensitive to the dangers of its being viewed as a “foreign” church or some kind of political threat, Cardinal Swiatek, who himself spent 10 years in a Soviet labor camp, has tried to keep the Roman Catholic Church out of the country’s internal political problems. Although the Cardinal has prohibited the display of Polish national symbols in churches and encouraged the use of Belarusian, rather than Polish, in church services, the Government claimed that some churches in western Belarus continue to conduct services in Polish.

It is estimated that approximately 120,000 citizens were considered as ethnic Jews near the end of the Soviet period in 1989. The current Jewish population numbers between 60,000 and 80,000. At least half of the present Jewish population are estimated to live in or near the capital city of Minsk. A majority of the country’s Jews are not actively religious. Of those who are, most are believed to be either Reform or Conservative. There is also a small but active Lubavitch-run Orthodox synagogue in Minsk.

Adherents of Protestant faiths, although representing a relatively small percentage of the population, are growing in number. Since 1990 the number of Protestant congregations, registered and unregistered, has increased more than twofold and now totals over 1,000, according to state and independent sources. Protestant faiths, although historically small in comparison with Orthodoxy, have been active in the country for hundreds of years. During the Soviet period, a number of Protestant faiths were placed forcibly under the administrative roof of a joint Pentecostal-Baptist organization. Currently, the two largest Protestant groups fall under separate Pentecostal and Baptist unions. A significant number of Protestant churches, including charismatic and Pentecostal groups, remain unregistered.

There are a number of congregations of the Greek Rite Catholic Church, which was once the majority religion. The Greek Catholic Church was established in the 16th century and once had a membership of approximately three-quarters of the population, until it was banned by the Russian Government in 1839. An attempt following Belarusian independence to revive the Church, which maintains Orthodox rituals but recognizes the Pope as its spiritual leader, so far has met with mixed success. Its emphasis on the use of the Belarusian language, the promotion of which is associated with the opposition Belarusian Popular Front, as well as historical tensions between the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches, reportedly has caused the Greek Catholic Church to be viewed with suspicion by the Lukashenko Government.

Other minority religious faiths include, but are not limited to, the following: Seventh-Day Adventist; Old Believer; Muslim (the Supreme Administration of Muslims, abolished in 1939, was reestablished in early 1994); Jehovah’s Witnesses; Apostolic Christian; Calvinist; and Lutheran.

The SCRNA claims that 26 religious confessions are registered officially. The significance of this figure is uncertain, however. Some congregations are registered only on a local basis, which entails only limited rights. Only congregations registered nationally are allowed to invite foreign religious workers and open new churches.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government denies some minority religious faiths permission to register officially and treats them as sects. In 1998 SCRNA official Vyacheslav Savitskiy announced that “11 destructive religious organizations, which have been denied registration after expert examination, illegally function in the country.” In April 1999, a conference organized by the Orthodox Church and Lukashenko’s National Assembly discussed the need to introduce legislation to combat “destructive sects” that operate illegally in the country. More recently, the authorities continue to deny repeated attempts by the BOAC to register. Following a raid by local police on a private house where a prayer service was being held, Ivan Spasyuk, a BOAC priest, went on a hunger strike on November 7, 1999 in order to protest the authorities’ refusal to register his parish in the Grodno region. On November 28, 1999, at the urging of his family and parishioners, Spasyuk called off the hunger strike. Local courts so far have refused to hear appeals made by the BOAC to overturn the Government’s decision not to register their churches. Because of ongoing registration problems, including the inability to register a seminary, the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church is unable to train a sufficient number of priests to meet the growing needs of its parishioners.

A number of Protestant faiths confront a situation in which they are refused registration because they do not have a legal address, and are refused property that could qualify as a legal address because they are not registered. The Full Gospel Pentecostal churches regularly are refused registration in this way. Article 272 of the Civil Code, which states that property may only be used for religious services once it has been converted from residential use. However, the authorities decline to permit such conversion to unregistered religions. Religious groups that can not register often are forced to meet illegally or in the homes of individual members. Several charismatic and Pentecostal churches have been evicted from property they were renting because they were not registered as religious organizations. A number of nontraditional Protestant and other faiths have not attempted to register because they do not believe that their applications would be approved. The publication of religious literature for unregistered religions likely would be restricted in practice, especially at state-controlled publishing houses. However, there were no reports of restrictions on the importation of religious literature. Government employees are not required to take any kind of religious oath or practice elements of a particular faith. However, the practice of a faith not viewed to be traditional, especially one not permitted to register, could disadvantage possible advancement within the bureaucracy or state sector.

Citizens are not prohibited from proselytizing; however, the Government enforces a July 1995 Council of Ministers decree that controls religious workers in an attempt to protect Orthodoxy and prevent the growth of evangelical religions. A 1997 Council of Ministers directive prohibits teaching religion at youth camps. In February 1999, the Council of Ministers passed Decree No. 280 which expanded upon these earlier regulations. The decree appears to stipulate, among other things, that among foreign religious workers, only male clergy may engage in religious work upon invitation from a religious organization already officially registered, a provision that could be invoked to prohibit female religious clergy, such as Catholic nuns, from engaging in religious activity. However, this provision has not been tested in the courts.

The Government stepped up its efforts to curb the role of foreign clergymen during the period covered by this report. In April 2000, the Council of Ministers introduced changes to its regulations, allowing internal affairs agencies to expel foreign clergymen from the country by not extending their registration or by denying them a temporary stay permit. Under the new regulations, these authorities are allowed to make decisions on expulsion on their own or based on recommendations from religious affairs councils, regional executive committees, or from the Religious Affairs Department of the Minsk City Executive Committee. Appeals to judicial bodies are not provided for.

As part of the Government’s efforts to curb the influence of foreign clergy, on March 18, 2000, two law enforcement officials entered the Roman Catholic Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Brest, during a church service, and arrested Catholic priest Zbigniew Karoljak, a Polish citizen, for allegedly violating visa regulations and charged that his religious work in the country was “illegal.” Regional government officials publicly have criticized Karoljak for his “undermining” views. In addition, a court in Brest issued warnings to four supporters of Karoljak for staging an unauthorized demonstration following the priest’s arrest. Karoljak departed the country in early June, following warnings from government authorities that he would be removed by force if he did not depart the country.



Foreigners generally are prohibited from preaching or heading churches, at least with respect to what the Government views as nontraditional faiths or sects, which include Protestant groups. Foreign missionaries may not engage in religious activities outside the institutions that invited them. One-year validity, multiple-entry, "spiritual activities" visas, which are required officially of foreign missionaries, can be difficult to get, even for faiths that registered with the Government and have a long history in the country. Foreign clergy or religious workers who do not register with the authorities or who have tried to preach without government approval or without an invitation from, and the permission of, a registered religious organization, have been expelled from the country. Approval often involves a difficult bureaucratic process. According to independent media accounts, in February 2000, the Belarusian pastor of a Pentecostal church was warned by SCRNA authorities that a public sermon was performed in his church by a citizen of Ukraine, in violation of the law on religion. The pastor was warned that a future violation of the law would lead the SCRNA to request that judicial bodies curtail the activities of that church.

Government officials share societal anti-Semitic attitudes and took a number of actions that indicated hostility or insensitivity toward the Jewish community. In March 2000, a Minsk court dismissed a complaint filed by Jewish organizations against the Orthodox Initiative for publishing an anti-Semitic book, "The War According to Mean Laws" (see Section II). The judge in the case declared that the book contained "scientific information" and, therefore, was not within the jurisdiction of the court. A higher court subsequently upheld the lower court ruling. On April 18, 2000, tax inspectors prohibited the central synagogue of Minsk from distributing matzoh for Passover among members of the Jewish community. The Tax Police informed the synagogue that, in order to distribute the matzoh, the synagogue would need to obtain a special license, register as a taxpayer, and open a store that would meet certain additional requirements, thereby effectively making distribution in time for the Passover celebration impossible. In December 1999, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal by the World Association of Belarusian Jews (WABJ) against the Ministry of Justice's refusal to register the association.

The Government does not require religious instruction in public schools. While individuals may speak freely about their religious beliefs, the authorities would be likely to prevent, interfere with, or punish individuals who proselytize on behalf of a unregistered religion.

Restitution of religious property remained limited during the period covered by this report. A key obstacle is the lack of a legal basis for restitution of property that was seized during the Soviet era and the Nazi occupation. The few returns of property to religious communities have been on an individual and inconsistent basis, and local government authorities in general are reluctant to cooperate on the issue. Over the past several years, the Jewish community has lobbied the Government successfully to return several properties in Minsk and other cities. However, most properties have not been returned. In August 1998, following extensive restoration, the Catholic community reconsecrated a church in Pruzhany that had been shut down by Soviet authorities following World War II. The consecration ceremony was led by the church's former priest who had spent 10 years in prison in Siberia during the Soviet period. The Orthodox Church appears to have had the most success on the issue of property restitution.

Officially sanctioned newspaper attacks on minority faiths also are rising in frequency. For example, on April 19, 2000, the *Narodnaya Gazetta*, a state-owned and published newspaper, carried an article with the headline "The prospect looms for Belarus to become a Protestant republic, or we are incessantly being urged to deny the faith of our ancestors." The article stated that Protestant groups engage in fanatical rituals, including the ritual use of human blood and human sacrifice. The article claimed that these same Protestant groups threaten Orthodox priests with physical violence and present a threat to the country, its psychological health, and its security. The article also called on the Government to take steps to protect Orthodoxy. Appeals to the SCRNA by Protestant leaders to halt distribution of the article were unsuccessful. In a similar article in January 2000, the *Narodnaya Gazetta* criticized the leader of the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, Ivan Spasyuk, accusing him of criminal activities and characterized the church as "the spiritual followers of Hitler."

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In November 1999, local police raided a private house where a BOAC congregation was engaged in a prayer service.

According to eyewitness and media reports, during their March 18, 2000 arrest of Catholic priest Zbigniew Karoljak, a Polish citizen, for allegedly violating visa

regulations, two law enforcement officials used excessive force. Karoljak's hands were secured behind his back and he was not allowed to bow before the altar before leaving the church. Karoljak was detained for several hours after his arrest.

Petro Hushcha, the head of a branch of the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (BOAC), was originally arrested in 1998 on a criminal charge that some believe to have been politically motivated. Hushcha has been in hiding since December 1998; his whereabouts are unknown.

There was a continued deterioration in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Restrictive regulations, passed by the Council of Ministers in February 1999, which govern the activities of foreign clergy and religious workers, remain in effect and were implemented routinely.

Except for the detention, for several hours, of Catholic priest Zbigniew Karoljak, there were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are, for the most part, amicable relations among registered, so-called traditional, religious communities. However sentiment critical of minority faiths is rising.

A number of attacks on Protestant groups, including the beating of a Pentecostal minister in Minsk by a group of skinheads in late winter of 2000, also have been reported. In August 1999, a mosque in Slonim was vandalized, a few days prior to the start of a Tatar youth convention to be held at the mosque. There were no reports of arrests in the April 1999 arson attack on the synagogue in Minsk or in a number of cases of desecration of Jewish cemeteries in 1997 and 1998.

There have been some instances of vandalism that appeared related to societal anti-Semitism. On May 11, 2000, the Minsk city court upheld the dismissal by an inferior court of a suit filed by Jewish organizations and individuals against the authors and publishers of the book "The War According to Mean Laws." The book, published by the Orthodox Initiative and distributed in Orthodox bookstores, includes the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and other anti-Semitic articles and blames Belarusian Jews for social and economic problems in the country. A Minsk district court ruled on March 16, 2000 that the book contained "scientific information" and dismissed the suit. The Union of Belarusian Jewish Associations and Communities and the World Association of Belarusian Jews, both of which joined in the suit, consider the book anti-Semitic and punishable under the Criminal Code for inciting religious and ethnic hatred. There has been a noticeable lack of government action in redressing instances of anti-Semitic vandalism in previous years. According to the Anti-Defamation League and the World Jewish Congress, there are a number of small ultra-nationalist organizations on the fringes of society, and a number of newspapers regularly print anti-Semitic material. One of these newspapers, *Slavianskaia Gazeta*, although distributed locally, reportedly was published in Moscow. The State Committee on the Press issued an official warning in June 1999 to the local newspaper *Lichnost* for anti-Semitic articles. Anti-Semitic material from Russia also circulates widely.

Many persons in the Jewish community remain concerned that the Lukashenko Government's plans to promote greater unity with Russia may be accompanied by political appeals to groups in Russia that tolerate or promote anti-Semitism. Lukashenko's calls for "Slavic solidarity" are well received and supported by anti-Semitic, neo-Fascist organizations in Russia. For example, the organization, Russian National Unity, has an active local branch. Its literature is distributed in public places in Minsk. The concept of a "Greater Slavic Union," the leadership of which Lukashenko seeks, is a source of concern to the Jewish community given the nature of support that it engenders.

There are several areas of pressing human rights concerns related to increasing political repression, and most local human rights nongovernmental organizations do not focus significant resources on the issue of religious freedom.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has raised problems of religious freedom with the Government in the context of frequent demarches on the overall poor human rights situation in the country. On April 13, 2000, the Ambassador sent a letter to the Governor of the Brest Oblast and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urging a resolution of the conflict concerning Catholic priest Karoljak (see Section I), following a meeting in Brest by

the Ambassador with Karoljak's congregation. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy have had frequent contacts with leaders and members of religious communities throughout the period covered by this report, and have worked with OSCE representatives to promote religious freedom.

In Washington, officials of the Department of State met on a number of occasions with representatives of the Government of Belarus to raise issues in support of religious freedom and other human rights concerns.

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## BELGIUM

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government took action against groups that it considers "harmful sects."

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities; however, several religious groups complain of discrimination, in particular groups considered by the Government to be sects. In September 1999, police raided offices and homes of members of the Church of Scientology.

The U.S. Embassy maintains constant contact with the Government in an effort to address problems of religious freedom.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The law accords "recognized" status to Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Anglicanism, Islam, and Greek and Russian Orthodoxy, and these religions receive subsidies from general government revenues. Taxpayers who object to contributing to religious subsidies have no recourse. By law, each recognized religion has the right to provide teachers at government expense for religious instruction in schools, but not all avail themselves of this right. For recognized religions, the Government pays the salaries, retirement, and lodging costs of ministers and also subsidizes the construction and renovation of church buildings. The ecclesiastical administrations of recognized religions have legal rights and obligations, and the municipality where they are located must pay any debts that they incur.

The Government applies the following five criteria in deciding whether to grant recognition: 1) the religion must have a structure or hierarchy; 2) the group must have a sufficient number of members; 3) the religion must have been in existence in Belgium for a long period of time; 4) the religion must offer a social value to the public; and 5) the group must abide by the laws of the State and respect public order. The five criteria are not listed in decrees or laws. The law does not further define "sufficient," "a long period of time," or "social value." However, as early as 1834 the Court of Cassation ruled that no subjective values should be used in determining what constitutes a religion. If a religion is not recognized by the Ministry of Justice, the decision may be appealed to the State Council.

The lack of independent recognized status does not prevent religious groups from practicing freely.

The Government also supports the freedom to participate in nonconfessional philosophical organizations (laics). Laics serve as a seventh recognized "religious" group, and their organizing body, the Central Council of Non-Religious Philosophical Communities of Belgium, receives funds and benefits similar to the six recognized religions. According to the Government, the nonconfessional philosophical organizations have 350,000 members. However, the laics claim 1.5 million members, or 15 percent of the population.

In 1999 the Evangelical Association (a group of evangelical Christian organizations) claimed discrimination due to the Government's refusal to grant it recognized status separate from the recognized Protestant group. Despite the Government's refusal, it is negotiating with the group in an effort to ensure that the Evangelical Association enjoys the same benefits as recognized religions. The Ministry of Justice is assisting in discussions intended to enable the Evangelical Association to be involved in the leadership of the recognized Protestant group.

### *Religious Demography*

The population of approximately 10 million is predominantly Roman Catholic. Approximately 75% of the population belongs to the Catholic Church. The Muslim population numbers approximately 350,000, 90 percent of which are Sunni. Protestants number between 90,000 and 100,000. Greek and Russian Orthodox churches have about 100,000 adherents. The Jewish population is approximately 40,000, and the Anglican Church has approximately 21,000 members. In addition to the recognized faiths, the largest nonrecognized religions are Jehovah's Witnesses, with approximately 27,000 baptized members, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), with approximately 3,000 members, and Buddhists, whose population numbers approximately 2,000. Unofficial estimates indicate that approximately 10 percent of the population does not practice any religion.

The most recent statistics available from the Catholic Church indicate that in 1995, 71 percent of children born in the country were baptized in the Catholic Church, 52 percent of all marriages took place in the Catholic Church, and funerals for 78 percent of all registered deaths were held in the Catholic Church.

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

In 1997 a parliamentary commission, established by the Government to recommend a policy to deal with the potential dangers that sects may represent to society—especially children—issued its report. It divided sects into two broadly defined categories. The report characterized a sect as an organized group of individuals espousing the same doctrine within a religion. The Commission considers sects in this sense to be respectable and to reflect the normal exercise of the freedom of religion and assembly provided for by fundamental rights. Harmful sectarian organizations, the second category, are defined as groups having or claiming to have a philosophical or religious purpose whose organization or practice involves illegal or injurious activities, harms individuals or society, or impairs human dignity. When the commission published its report, it attached a list of 189 sectarian organizations that were mentioned during testimony presented to the commission. The list did not characterize any of the groups as harmful. Parliament adopted the report's recommendations but did not adopt the attached list of sects.

To implement one of the report's recommendations, in May 1998 Parliament passed legislation creating a "Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations." Although the Center is not yet fully operational, it has begun to collect open source information on a wide range of religious and philosophical groups and to provide information and advice to the public regarding the legal rights of freedom of association, freedom of privacy, and freedom of religion.

The Government established a budget for the Center, which was scheduled to open in 1999, but has not yet published regulations to govern its operations. The Center is expected to become fully operational in summer 2000. In April 2000, regulations to govern the Center's operations were submitted to Parliament for approval. The Center is authorized to propose policy or legislation on the problem of sects but is not authorized to provide opinions or assessments of individual sectarian organizations. Parliament also passed legislation in October 1998 creating an interagency body that is to work in conjunction with the Center to coordinate government policy on sects, and on May 3, 2000, the Minister of Justice signed a decree to establish the interagency body. The names of the members of this body are to become public in June 2000. The Minister of Justice is the principal coordinator of the Administrative Coordination Cell, which is expected to begin functioning when the Center for Information becomes fully operational in the summer of 2000. Neither the Government nor Parliament has yet taken any action to establish a special police unit on sects, but the Government has designated one national magistrate in the District Court of First Instance to monitor cases involving sects. Both measures were recommendations of the 1997 parliamentary report.

The law creating the Center also stipulates that the harmful nature of a sectarian group is to be evaluated in reference to principles contained in the Constitution, orders, laws, decrees, and in international human rights instruments ratified by the Government.

The parliamentary report also recommended that the country's community governments sponsor information campaigns to educate the public—especially children—regarding the phenomenon of harmful sects. In March 1999, the Francophone Community government launched a prevention campaign called "Gurus, Beware!" The campaign was intended to fulfill the commission's recommendation to educate the country's youth on the dangers posed by harmful sects. Information for the campaign was disseminated through pamphlets, brochures, television, and cinema advertisements. On one page, the brochure discussed 20 of the groups listed in the 1997 commission report and stated that Belgium harbors certain "dangerous sects."

In April 1999, one of the groups discussed in the brochure, the Anthroposophic Society (based in Antwerp), filed suit to halt its distribution. An Antwerp court issued an order enjoining the Francophone Community government from further distribution of the brochure until all defamatory language referring to this group is removed from the text. The Francophone Community agreed not to publish any additional brochures. Other sectarian organizations placed on the 1997 parliamentary list continue to complain that the list is discriminatory.

In December 1998, Parliament enacted legislation formally charging Belgian State Security with the duty to monitor harmful sectarian organizations as potential threats to the internal security of the country. This legislation uses the same language as the Parliamentary commission's report and defines "harmful sectarian organizations" as any religious or philosophical group that, through its organization or practices, engages in activities that are illegal, injurious, or harmful to individuals or society.

Several religious groups complain of incidents of religious discrimination. For example, leaders of the Muslim Executive Council report that women and girls wearing traditional dress or headscarves in some cases face discrimination in employment and school admissions.

Some courts in Flanders have stipulated, in the context of child custody proceedings and as a condition of granting visitation rights, that a noncustodial parent who is a member of Jehovah's Witnesses may not expose his or her children to the teachings or lifestyle of that religious group during visits. These courts have claimed that such exposure would be harmful to the child. However, other courts have not imposed this restriction.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools but does not require students to attend religion classes. Public school religion teachers are nominated by a committee from their religious group and appointed by the Minister of Education. All public schools have a teacher for each of the six recognized religions. The Catholic Church also maintains a network of private schools at the primary and secondary levels. Catholic schools receive government subsidies for working expenses and teacher salaries. Children and their parents may choose the religious course in which they wish to be enrolled. A seventh choice, a nonconfessional course, is available if the child does not wish a religious course.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

On September 30, 1999, a 110-officer police force raided offices and homes of members of the Church of Scientology. No arrests or convictions resulted from this raid. The Government is unwilling to provide further statements, as the matter is still under investigation. Church members stated that the Government's seizure and retention of church computers, materials, and files impede the ability of the Church to practice freely. The Church also filed a complaint that the Prosecutor's Office provided a statement to the press in violation of secrecy laws; the complaint is pending and no action was taken by mid-2000.

The Church of Scientology expressed frustration with a lack of access and communication with the Government, both before and after the September 1999 raids of church property and followers' homes.

In April 2000, the Belgian Consulate in Los Angeles refused missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) visas to enter Belgium for missionary work. Similar visas had been processed for decades without problems. In May 2000, the Ministry of Interior instituted temporary procedures to ensure the issuance of visas to Mormon missionaries and undertook to establish permanent procedures by October 2000.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. At the national level, there is an annual general assembly of the National Ecumenical Commission to discuss various religious themes. The Catholic Church sponsors working groups at the national level to maintain dialog and promote tolerance among all religious groups. At the local level, every Catholic diocese has established commissions for inter-faith dialog.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains constant contact with the Government in an effort to address problems of religious freedom.

At the October 1999 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) meeting, Belgium was criticized by the U.S. delegate for religious discrimination/intolerance and failure to meet OSCE commitments on protecting religious freedom. The U.S. delegate asked what steps Belgium would take to ensure that the Government's "anti-sect" organizations do not become vehicles for promoting prejudice and stereotypes. In response, the Government stated that it had an open dialog with sects, and that this dialog takes place both in public and behind closed doors.

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed the issue of religious freedom throughout the period covered by this report with officials from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Interior, as well as with Members of Parliament. There is an ongoing dialog between the Embassy and the Ministry of Justice at the cabinet level regarding the implementation of recommendations of the 1997 parliamentary report on sectarian organizations. During the period covered by this report, embassy officials also met with representatives of all recognized religions (Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Anglicanism, Islam, and Greek and Russian Orthodoxy), as well as with groups such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Scientology.

The U.S. Embassy and the Government worked in international human rights forums to criticize religious rights abuses in other countries. Embassy officials met with high-level government officials and actively assisted in resolving outstanding complaints of religious discrimination.

In response to a U.S. request, the Government has addressed the problem of visas for Mormon missionaries (see Section I.)

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## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and in general individuals enjoy this right in predominately mixed and religious-majority areas. However, the efforts of individuals to worship in areas in which they are an ethnic/religious minority were restricted, sometimes by societal violence.

There was a slight improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Decreasing support for nationalist parties among the electorate and increasing refugee returns are moderating ethnic/religious discrimination in many areas, although serious problems remain.

Religious intolerance in the country is a reflection of ethnic intolerance because the identification of ethnicity with religious background is so close as to be virtually indistinguishable. As ethnic tensions in the country ease, religious tensions ease as well. However, incidents of religiously motivated violence continued.

The U.S. Government has sought to engage leaders from all three major religious communities to play a more supportive role in promoting a multiethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. U.S. support for full implementation of the Dayton Accords and refugee returns is helping to improve tolerance.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and in general, individuals enjoy this right in predominately mixed and religious-majority areas. However, the efforts of individuals to worship in areas in which they are an ethnic and religious minority were restricted by government and institutional harassment and sometimes by societal violence.

The Constitutions of the State and of both entities provide for religious freedom. While the majority of the population of the Federation consists of Bosniaks and Croats, neither Islam nor Roman Catholicism enjoys special status under the Federation Constitution. In the Republika Srpska (RS), although the Constitution provides for religious freedom, it also states that "the Serbian Orthodox Church shall be the church of the Serb people and other people of Orthodox religion." The Constitution also directs the State to "materially support the Orthodox Church." However, these provisions are being contested before the Constitutional Court in a case that claims that special status for any ethnic group is contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights, which is incorporated in the Constitution.

### *Religious Demography*

Because of the close identification of ethnicity with religious heritage, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between religious freedom and freedom from ethnic discrimination. The three largest ethnic groups are identified with three distinct religions, or at least religious ancestries. These groups include Bosniaks, who are Muslim or of Muslim descent, Croats, who are Roman Catholic or of Roman Catholic descent, and Serbs, who are Serbian Orthodox or of Orthodox descent. Many individuals are of mixed descent. Many also came of age under Tito's socialism when religion was suppressed and identification as "Yugoslav" was encouraged. While no census has been taken in the country since 1991, a credible estimate of the ethnic breakdown is that 46 percent of the population would be considered Bosniak, 14 percent Croat, and 31 percent Serb. The remainder of the population includes those of Romani, Jewish, and other origin.

As a legacy of the Communist period of 1945 to 1991 when religion was discouraged, the practice of religion is low among all groups. However, religious practice reportedly is increasing among the young. Religious practice is reportedly highest among Croats in the Herzegovina region.

### *Government Abuses of Religious Freedom*

All three major religious groups and the Jewish community have claims to property confiscated from them during World War II, the Communist period, or the 1992–95 war. Neither the State nor the entity governments have enacted laws clarifying the legal status or ownership rights of religious organizations. However, the leaders of the Muslim, Roman Catholic, Serbian Orthodox, and Jewish communities are working on a law setting out the status of religious organizations, including property rights and tax status (see Section II). Municipal and cantonal authorities have broad discretion regarding disposition of this property. Many use this as a tool of political patronage. This renders religious leaders dependent on the whims of nationalist politicians to regain lost property. Some international observers believe that a legal framework providing equal religious status for all religious communities throughout the country would decrease the dependence of religious leaders on nationalist politicians from their respective communities.

Prior to mid-1998, car license plates identified vehicles as being registered in predominantly Bosniak, Serb, or Croat areas. This constituted a major obstacle to freedom of minorities to safely visit cemeteries and other religious sites in areas of the country with a majority population of a different group. The introduction in June 1998 of universal license plates significantly improved the ability of religious minorities to visit such sites.

An estimated 1.2 million citizens remained internally displaced persons (IDP's) or refugees abroad as a result of the 1992–95 war. Virtually all had fled areas where their ethnic/religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war.

In certain instances, local officials have blocked the return of minority religious leaders by using administrative obstacles.

Numerous buildings belonging to the Islamic, Serbian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communities were damaged or destroyed during the 1992–1995 war, usually in deliberate attempts at ethnic intimidation. Administrative and financial obstacles to rebuilding religious structures impeded the return of minorities in many areas. RS authorities have blocked the reconstruction of any of the mosques or other Islamic community-owned buildings in Banja Luka and other areas destroyed during the war. In June 1999, the Muslim community won a case against RS authorities filed with the Human Rights Chamber, a legal institution established by the Dayton Accords. The RS Government has allowed the Muslim community to block off the sites, but has not yet allowed reconstruction to begin on one site near Zvornik. Local authorities in the RS also have obstructed attempts to rebuild mosques, particularly the symbolically important Ferhadija Central Mosque in Banja Luka.

In August 1998, the municipal government of Prnjavor, in the RS, ordered a Bosniak to move his deceased wife's remains from the Muslim cemetery to a "new" Muslim cemetery. The municipal authorities claimed that the Muslim cemetery in which the deceased had been buried was closed. At a February 1999 Human Rights Chamber hearing concerning the case, evidence indicated that there was in fact no "new" Muslim cemetery in the area and that no reasonable grounds had existed for closing the old Muslim cemetery (nearby Catholic and Orthodox cemeteries remained open). In February 2000, the Human Rights Chamber determined that the municipal government of Prnjavor had discriminated against the Islamic community by closing the cemetery. Prnjavor municipal authorities were ordered to allow burials within a month. As of mid-2000, Prnjavor authorities had not complied.

Public schools offer religious education classes. In theory, these classes are optional. However, in some areas, children who do not choose religion classes are subject to pressure and discrimination from peers and teachers. Schools generally do not hire teachers to offer religious education classes to students of minority religions. In Sarajevo canton schools, except for non-Bosniak schools, only offer Islamic religion classes. In Croat-majority West Mostar minority students theoretically have the right to take classes in non-Catholic religions; however, this option reportedly does not exist in practice. Orthodox symbols are present in public schools throughout the RS. For a variety of reasons, minority families with children have been slow to return to the RS. Consequently, municipalities have not yet been compelled to deal with the issue of minority religious education. On May 10, 2000, the Education Ministers of both entities and the Deputy Federation Education Minister agreed on a standard curriculum, which requires all schools to teach the shared cultural heritage of all three communities.

Parties dominated by a single ethnic group remain powerful in the country, particularly in Serb and Croat-dominated areas. All these parties have identified themselves closely with the religion associated with their predominant ethnic group. Many leaders of these parties are former Communists who have adopted the characteristics of ethnicity, including religion, to strengthen their credibility with voters.

However, the nationalist lock on power appears to be weakening somewhat. The defeat of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) in Croatia's January 2000 general elections and February 2000 presidential elections is expected to weaken eventually the HDZ hard-liners in Herzegovina. In the Federation, the Bosniak-dominated Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and the HDZ continue to dominate the Federation Government, but a number of municipalities came under the control of the multi-ethnic Social Democratic Party (SDP) as a result of municipal elections held on April 8, 2000. The Serb Democratic Party (SDS) remained ideologically committed to Serb cultural and religious authority in the territory of the RS. The Serb Radical Party (SRS) was banned from participation in the April 2000 elections, but retains an even more hard-line Serb nationalist philosophy. However, more moderate, pro-Dayton parties in the RS significantly improved their showing in the municipal elections. The RS Government and the RS National Assembly (RSNA) continued to promote the Serbian Orthodox Church through the official endorsement of Orthodox symbols in schools and government buildings, and prayers led by Serbian Orthodox clergy at the opening of RSNA sessions. The religious background of minorities generally is ignored.

Bosniak deputies in the RS Assembly, the entity parliament that meets in Banja Luka, have been subjected to harsh rhetoric, and on one occasion to physical violence, from Serb colleagues at Assembly sessions. At the beginning of every Assembly session, an Orthodox priest recites a prayer, which leads Bosniak members to feel obliged to excuse themselves. Orthodox priests also deliver a sectarian blessing every time a new Assembly is sworn in.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor US Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

There was a slight improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In April 2000, RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik shared the stage in the RS Government's headquarters in Banja Luka with the newly appointed mufti of Banja Luka and three other Muslim clerics. In Mostar religious leaders representing all groups except Catholics attended celebrations for Muslim, Jewish, and Orthodox holidays. Also in Mostar, the Bosniak mayor has committed to providing \$10,000 (20,000 deutsche marks) to rebuild the home of the resident Orthodox priest, which was destroyed in the war. The priest currently lives in Trebinje in the RS. In Zvornik, for the first time since the war, the RS Government has allowed the Muslim community to begin reconstruction of a destroyed mosque. A significant number of citizens remained IDP's or refugees abroad as a result of the 1992-95 war. Virtually all had fled areas where their ethnic/religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war. Both organized and spontaneous returns significantly increased during the period covered by this report.



## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Until the 19th century, most Bosnians identified themselves by religious affiliation. With the rise of Balkan nationalism in the 19th century, Bosnians came to identify themselves in ethnic, as well as religious terms. This tendency increased during the Communist era when the regime discouraged religious affiliation. Under the Communists, most Bosnians identified themselves by ethnic group, or simply as "Yugoslavs." Since the country's independence, there have continued to be Bosnians who decline to accept either ethnic or religious identification and consider themselves simply as "Bosnians."

The 1992–1995 war resulted in over 270,000 deaths. While the war was not a religious conflict per se, due to the close association of ethnicity and religion in the country, bitterness over the war has contributed to mutual suspicion among members of all three major religious groups.

Despite the constitutional provisions for religious freedom, a degree of discrimination against minorities occurs in virtually all parts of the country. Discrimination is significantly worse in the RS than in the Federation. Sarajevo, the Bosniak-majority capital of the country, has preserved in part its traditional role as a multi-ethnic city. However, instances of discrimination exist in Sarajevo, especially in the areas of housing and support for the return of minority refugees and displaced persons.

Throughout the country, religious minorities felt pressure and were intimidated by the ethnic/religious majority. In 1999 violent incidents continued to hinder worship and cause damage to religious edifices and cemeteries. In the first half of 2000, there reportedly were incidents of vandalism.

There were instances of mob violence in the RS aimed at preventing Catholics from worshipping. In December 1999, a group of young men attacked a group of Catholic priests that was led by Archbishop Vinko Cardinal Puljic and was on its way to celebrate Mass in Derventa in the western RS. One member of Puljic's party was injured, but the service took place as planned. There was no known RS Government involvement in the attack. In Bosniak-dominated Zenica, the Catholic school closed temporarily in March 2000 after school officials received a bomb threat. Though local authorities later discovered that the threat was a hoax, Zenica's few remaining Catholics are concerned for their safety. On June 25, 2000, an explosive device destroyed a Catholic chapel in Zivinice.

In Croat-dominated areas of Herzegovina, Muslims felt pressure not to practice their religion in public and have been the subject of violent attacks. In the Croat-dominated western Bosnian town of Glamoc, a building housing all local Muslim organizations and the apartment of a Muslim cleric was bombed and seriously damaged in April 2000.

Leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Jewish communities have committed themselves publicly to building a durable peace and national reconciliation. The leaders of these four communities are members of the Interreligious Affairs Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operates with the active involvement of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization. During the period covered by this report, the council was more active than in the previous year. In November 1999, it published, without international assistance, a glossary of religious terms designed to promote mutual understanding of other religious traditions. The council members made several joint appearances together, including one in Brcko in October 1999. The council is drafting a law to set out the rights and status of religious organizations in regard to the Bosnian Government (see Section I). The council members plan to work together for the law's passage. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Office of the High Representative facilitated many inter-faith meetings at the local level as well.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

In addition to its broad and active efforts to foster return, democracy, and human rights throughout Bosnia, the U.S. Government has sought to engage leaders from all major religious communities to play a more supportive role in promoting a multi-ethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. The U.S. Government has provided financial support to the Human Rights Chamber, which has heard cases on religious discrimination (see Section II). The Ambassador has met with the principal religious leaders, individually and collectively, to urge them to work toward moderation and multiethnicity. The U.S. Agency for International Development has funded training for lawyers and judges concerning the European Convention on Human

Rights, which provides for religious freedom, and to which the parties to the Dayton Accords agreed to adhere.

## BULGARIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice for some non-Orthodox religious groups. This restriction is manifested primarily in a registration process that is selective, slow, and non-transparent. The Government prohibits the public practice of religion by groups that are not registered.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Public opinion and periodic media articles continued to suggest a somewhat hostile and alarmist attitude toward nontraditional religious groups, although less frequently than in earlier years. Periodic episodes of government harassment of nontraditional religious groups continue to occur on an occasional basis, especially at the local and regional levels. The legislature considered several versions of a draft law on religion that caused concern among some religious and human rights groups, because of its potential to give the Government an intrusive and controlling role in the affairs of religious denominations. The final bill has not been voted on yet.

The U.S. Government has raised the issue of religious freedom repeatedly in contacts with government officials and Members of Parliament. The Ambassador and other embassy officers periodically have urged the Government to expedite registration of church groups, and on numerous occasions have pointed out problems with several aspects of the proposed law on religion under discussion in the Parliament.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice for some non-Orthodox religious groups. This restriction is manifested primarily in a registration process that is selective, slow, and non-transparent. The Government prohibits the public practice of religion by groups that are not registered.

The legal requirement that groups whose activities have a religious element register with the Council of Ministers remained an obstacle to the activity of some religious groups, such as the Unification Church and the Church of the Nazarene (which has tried repeatedly to register for over 5 years), prior to or in the absence of registration. Furthermore several municipal governments established local registration requirements for religious groups, despite the lack of clear legal authority to do so. In some cases, local authorities used the lack of registration as a pretext for interference against some groups and employed arbitrary harassment tactics against others. During the period covered by this report, the ability of a few religious groups to conduct services or to spread their religious message freely came under occasional attack, both as a result of action by local government authorities and because of public intolerance. Although fewer instances were reported than in earlier years, sporadic reports of this nature persist.

The Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the “traditional” religion. The Government provides financial support for the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as several other religious communities perceived as holding historic places in society, such as the Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths. These groups generally benefit from a relatively high degree of governmental and societal tolerance.

#### *Religious Demography*

Official census statistics indicate that approximately 86 percent of citizens are Orthodox, 13 percent are Muslim, 1 percent is Catholic, and most of the remainder belong to a variety of Protestant religions. The country’s Jewish community, with only a few thousand persons, constitutes less than 1 percent of the population and generally is well accepted and integrated into society. Some observers believe that this census gives disproportionate strength to the Orthodox Church, in part because reportedly many essentially nonreligious or anti-religious persons were listed as Orthodox by default. Muslim leaders claim that their adherents constitute as much as 20 percent of the population.

Some religious minorities are concentrated geographically. The Rhodope Mountains (along the country’s southern border with Greece) are home to many Muslims,

including ethnic Turks, Roma, and Pomaks (Slavic Bulgarians who converted to Islam centuries ago under Ottoman rule). At the western extreme of the Rhodopes, there are greater numbers of Pomaks, and on the eastern end, more ethnic Turks. Muslim ethnic Turks and Roma also live in large numbers in the northeast of the country, primarily in and around the cities of Shumen and Razgrad, as well as along the Black Sea coast. There are comparatively large numbers of Roman Catholics in Plovdiv, Assenovgrad, and in cities along the Danube River, as well as eastern rite Catholic communities in Sofia and Smolyan. Many members of the country's small Jewish community live in Sofia, Ruse, and along the Black Sea coast. However, Protestant groups are dispersed more widely throughout the country.

Although no exact data are available on attendance levels, most observers agree that evangelical Protestants tend to participate in religious services more frequently than other religious groups. Members of the country's Catholic community also are regarded as more likely than members of other faiths to regularly attend religious services.

For most registered religious groups there were no restrictions on attendance at religious services or on private religious instruction. A school for imams, a Muslim cultural center, university theological faculties, and religious primary schools operated freely. Bibles and other religious materials in the Bulgarian language were imported freely and printed on most occasions, and Muslim, Catholic, and Jewish publications were published regularly.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

There were several incidents of harassment of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses by police and local authorities. For example, in July 1999, police in Stara Zagora interrupted a Mormon church service, demanded that worshippers produce their identity documents, and recorded the names and identification numbers of everyone present. They also required that church leaders present registration papers and a contract for the use of the building, which the church representatives did not have with them. The police alleged that the Mormon church was not registered properly with the city authorities.

On July 15, 1999, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses was required to pay approximately \$250 (500 leva) because of his participation in a June 1998 Bible study meeting in Plovdiv, which was deemed unlawful because Jehovah's Witnesses was an unregistered denomination. Jehovah's Witnesses alleges that the accused man and his lawyer were not present for the hearing at which the fine was imposed because the venue was changed without notice, and they therefore arrived 5 minutes late for the proceedings. Two other members of Jehovah's Witnesses who have been ordered to pay approximately \$250 (500 leva) fines for similar offenses still await a final determination on their cases.

In December 1999, police in Pernik interrupted a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses. The police examined and recorded the identity documents of those present, and warned that such meetings should not be held in the future. The group was cited for violation of a city ordinance.

In April 2000, several Mormon missionaries in Plovdiv were challenged by police while distributing literature and were required to go to the police station. They were charged with distributing brochures without a license.

In April 2000, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses was refused entry into the country by border police, reportedly on the grounds that she had been deported from the country in 1997 for practicing her then-unregistered faith.

A number of religious groups have complained that foreign-national missionaries and religious leaders experience difficulties in obtaining and renewing residence visas in the country; the issuance of residence visas appears to be subject to the whim of individual authorities.

The Ministry of Education initiated a course on religion in the high school curriculum beginning with the 1998/1999 school year. The original plan called for a world religion course that avoided endorsing any particular faith; however, members of other religions, especially ethnic Turkish Muslims, maintain that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church receives privileged coverage in the textbooks. The religion course is optional and is not available at all schools. The Ministry of Education has cooperated with the chief mufti to initiate a pilot program of optional Islamic education classes in primary schools. If the pilot program is successful, the program purportedly would be made more broadly available in the school system.

At the Department of Theology of Sofia University all students are required to present an Orthodox Church baptismal certificate, and married students must present an Orthodox marriage certificate, in order to enroll in the Department's classes. These requirements make it impossible for non-Orthodox students to enroll in the Department.

The Government has committed to eliminating its military construction and transportation battalions, and has begun the phaseout process, which is expected to take 2 more years. Turkish and Roma minorities, who predominantly are Muslim, traditionally have been conscripted into these special work battalions, rather than being assigned to regular military units, to fulfill their mandatory military service requirements. Despite the phaseout of these units, the underlying discrimination issue remains unresolved. Ethnic and religious minorities continue to be conscripted into forced labor in military work units, while simultaneously remaining essentially barred from the professional military officer corps.

In March 1999, a schoolteacher in Gabrovo who is a member of a Pentecostal church resigned from her job. She claimed that she was intimidated into resigning as a result of her religious beliefs. She has filed two lawsuits, one for violation of contract and a second for libel. She received a favorable ruling on the first case, and the second remains pending.

There were no indications that the Government discriminated against members of any religious group in making restitution to previous owners of properties that were nationalized during the Communist regime. The Government has supported in principle the need for restitution, although actual progress apparently has stalled on two lucrative commercial properties believed to belong rightfully to the Jewish community. The Orthodox Church and the Muslim community each claim significant numbers of properties currently held by the Government, although the validity of some of these claims may be open to dispute.

The Government refused to recognize an alternative Patriarch elected by supporters in 1996, and the schism that opened in the Orthodox Church in 1992 continued, despite the death of this alternative Patriarch in April 1999. The Government nevertheless encouraged the feuding factions to heal their prolonged rift. To date, these efforts have not been successful.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In March 2000, two members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Turgovishte were detained briefly by police and charged with disruption of public order under a city ordinance because of their public proselytizing.

The National Assembly passed a law on alternatives to military service in October 1998, which entered into force on January 1, 1999. Under this new law, alternative service is now 2 years, more than twice as long as military service. (Conscripted military service has been reduced to 9 months for most recruits, while university graduates are to serve just 6 months.) Reportedly, several individuals currently are serving in an alternative civilian capacity in lieu of military service, although human rights observers complain that procedures for invoking this alternative as a conscientious objector are unclear. Among those already performing alternate service is Krassimir Savov, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses previously imprisoned for refusing mandatory military service, who was released from prison by presidential pardon in March 1999. There were no new reports of incarcerations on religious grounds during the period covered by this report.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government generally has encouraged greater religious tolerance since early 1998 by generally seeking to promote greater understanding among different faiths. However, while the observance of religious freedom has improved for some nontraditional groups, other groups have faced official disfavor and been disadvantaged by the Government's persistent refusal to grant registration. Other church groups have obtained registration from the national Government, but continue to face some discrimination and antipathy from many local governments. The national Government has not sought to dissuade local governments from abiding by these municipal government decisions, which appear to fall into a gray area of the law. Burgas, Plovdiv, and Stara Zagora are among the municipalities that have prompted the greatest number of complaints of harassment of non-traditional religious groups. Some observers note with concern a tendency by certain municipalities to enact regulations that may be used to limit religious freedom if a perceived need arises. For example, a regulation passed by Sofia municipality in February 1999 forbids references to miracles and healing during religious services, a provision that many fear may be employed as a pretext to ban or interrupt services by charismatic evangelical groups. The regulation cites a Communist-era law dating from 1949, which is technically still in effect, and which forbids foreigners from proselytizing and administering religious services in the country. Other municipalities have enacted similar regulations. The 1949 law also has been criticized in its own right as an outmoded potential impediment to free religious activity. However, despite the law's continued technical validity, foreign missionaries can and do receive permission to proselytize in the country.

A new law on religion currently is being developed in Parliament. Several variations have been introduced and are under discussion by parliamentarians. As written, the bills that have been put forward contain a number of provisions that potentially could infringe on religious freedom, and tend to grant the central Government a controlling role in overseeing religious groups. However, there are indications that some of these problems may be mitigated through the consultation process during which the final draft language is prepared (see Section III).

*Forced Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between religious communities generally were good; however, discrimination, harassment, and general public intolerance of nontraditional religious minorities (primarily newer evangelical Protestant groups) remained an intermittent problem. Strongly held suspicion of evangelical denominations among the Orthodox populace is widespread and pervasive across the political spectrum and has resulted in discrimination. Often cloaked in a veneer of "patriotism," intolerance of the religious beliefs of others is extremely common. Such mainstream public pressure for the containment of "foreign religious sects" inevitably influences policymakers. Nevertheless, human rights observers agreed that such discrimination has lessened somewhat over the last 2 years as society has appeared to become more accepting of a least some previously unfamiliar religions.

Certain religions, including both groups denied registration and those officially registered, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, faced discriminatory practices prior to registration in late 1998, as did other groups, which, despite full compliance with the law, were greeted with hostility by the press, segments of the public, and certain government officials. However, this problem continued during the period covered by this report, and is more pervasive, affecting more than just one group.

In August 1999, the Mormon Church in Burgas suffered vandalism when stones were thrown through two of the church windows. In October 1999, in Kotel a group of youths who claimed to be activists of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) political party chased a representative of the Lutheran Church and his family from the home in which there were staying. In December 1999, the Zion Christian Church in Stara Zagora was vandalized with hate graffiti.

Non-Orthodox religious groups continued to be affected adversely by periodic negative media coverage. A variety of media outlets drew lurid and inaccurate pictures of the activities of NonOrthodox religious groups. For example, the Open Bible Fellowship church was accused of being financed by drug and gun smuggling profits. Members of the press commonly accuse nontraditional religious groups of promoting suicide, drug use, and the breakup of families.

In May 2000, in Maritsa volunteer workers representing the Christian Unity Foundation were beaten, one severely, when they attempted to conduct a scheduled screening of a documentary style film on the life of Jesus Christ. The film itself was stolen from their car. The attack was carried out by six to eight youths, under the apparent direction of a local Bulgarian Orthodox priest.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy regularly monitors religious freedom in ongoing contacts with government officials, clergy, lay leaders of minority communities, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). Embassy officers have met with Orthodox clergy from both sides of the schism, with the chief mufti of the Muslim community, with religious and lay leaders of the Jewish community, as well as with the leaders of numerous Protestant denominations. During the period covered by this report, the Embassy was particularly active in engaging the Government on its proposed new law on religion, which remains pending in the Parliament (see Section I). The Ambassador, embassy officers, and a visiting State Department official from the Office of International Religious Freedom met with a diverse cross-section of relevant government officials and Members of Parliament to advocate a liberal approach to religious freedom under the new law. Embassy officers have maintained close contact with human rights and religious groups to remain attuned to their concerns about the proposed law. The U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also raised the issue of a liberal approach to religious freedom under the new law with Bulgaria's OSCE ambassador.

## CANADA

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

Religious groups do not have to register with the Government.

#### *Religious Demography*

There is no state or dominant religion; however, 82.1 percent of the population belong to Christian denominations, with Roman Catholics (45.2 percent) forming the largest single group. Other Catholic groups include Eastern Orthodox (1.4 percent) and Ukrainian Catholics (0.5 percent). Protestants constitute 36.4 percent of the population, consisting of the United Church (11.5 percent), Anglicans (8.1 percent), Presbyterians (2.4 percent), Lutherans (2.4 percent), Baptists (2.5 percent), Pentecostals (1.6 percent), and other Protestant denominations (7.9 percent). Members of other religions include Jews (1.2 percent), Muslims (0.9 percent), Buddhists (0.6 percent), Hindus (0.6 percent), Sikhs (0.5 percent), groups such as Scientology, Kabalarianism, and Rastafarianism (0.1 percent), and other religions (0.1 percent). Those professing no religion constitute 12.5 percent of the population.

A wide range of religious faiths practice missionary activity throughout the country without special legal restrictions.

The Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protect the rights or privileges possessed by denominational schools at the time of national union in 1867. In practice this protection has meant that some provinces have funded and continue to fund Catholic school education, and some provinces (such as Quebec) have funded some Protestant education. In March 1999, the government-mandated Proulx task force submitted its report to Quebec's National Assembly. Its 14 recommendations include abolishing Catholic and Protestant status for public schools and creating secular public schools instead, with religions studied from a cultural perspective. School boards are scheduled to respond to the Quebec government by July 1, 2001.

In July 1999, a one-person Board of Inquiry ruled that it was discriminatory to require recitation of the Lord's Prayer in Saskatoon public schools. Saskatchewan joined Canada under the terms of the Saskatchewan Act, which forms part of the provincial constitution, permitting prayer and Bible readings. As a result of the ruling, the Lord's Prayer is not recited in Saskatoon public schools. The Saskatoon school board began public hearings on the issue in the fall of 1999, and is attempting to find alternatives to satisfy both sides.

There is no official government council for inter-faith dialog, but the Government provides funding for individual ecumenical projects on a case-by-case basis.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general amicable relations exist between the various religious communities.

The B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights received 267 reports of anti-Semitic incidents in 1999. This represented an increase of 11 percent from the 240 incidents reported in 1998. At mid-2000, the Human Rights Tribunal, a government entity, was examining whether a specific web site exposed Jews to hatred or con-

tempt on the basis of their race, religion, or ethnic origin. The Tribunal is expected to hear the case in October 2000.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## CROATIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religious conviction, and the Government respects these rights in practice.

The overall situation for religious freedom improved somewhat during the period covered by this report, with representatives of various religious communities pointing to the election of a democratic coalition government in January 2000 as the first positive step towards a fuller respect for religious freedom. Officials of the new Government expressed a commitment to eliminating discrimination and to improving respect for human rights; however, the Government's approach thus far has been ad hoc, addressing problems as they arise and resolving issues with individual religious communities rather than setting uniform non-discriminatory standards and practices for all communities.

Notions of religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in society. During the past 10 years religious institutions of all faiths have been targets of violence, reflecting the conflicts underway. Such incidents still occur, particularly in the Danubian region (eastern Slavonia), where there were persistent reports of vandalism directed against Serb Orthodox buildings and cemeteries.

The U.S. Government continues to encourage the Government to respect religious freedom in practice. The Secretary of State met with Catholic Archbishop Bozanic in February 2000. Embassy officials frequently meet with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities and with government officials to promote respect for religious freedom and protection of human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religious conviction, and the Government respects these rights in practice.

While there is no official state religion, the Roman Catholic Church receives state financing to support pensions for priests and nuns through the government-managed pension and health funds. Other religious communities still do not have such an agreement with the State, nor is there a law that regulates these issues. (Orthodox priests and imams have been paying their contributions to the health and pension funds from their own resources, in order to be covered by a pension plan.) In the past, the dividing line between the Catholic Church and the State often was blurred, as the then-ruling HDZ party periodically attempted to identify itself more closely with the Catholic Church. However, parliamentary elections in January 2000 brought to power a democratic Government committed to respect human rights and to improve cooperation with all religious communities. Since Archbishop Josip Bozanic took office in 1997, the Catholic Church has sought an independent role for itself and was at times openly critical of the previous government. In November 1999, the Croatian Catholic Bishops' Conference refused to endorse the HDZ party in the January 2000 elections, calling on the faithful to vote freely and to overcome the "old, intolerant one-party mentality."

Representatives of several religious communities state that the overall situation has improved somewhat during the reporting period. The election of a democratic government in January 2000 is a positive step toward greater respect for religious freedom. While the new Government has expressed interest in eliminating religious discrimination, its approach is ad hoc, treating problems as they arise and addressing specific issues (for example, the validity of religious marriage ceremonies) with individual religious communities rather than setting uniform non-discriminatory standards and practices. No law on religious communities has been adopted as yet by the new Government to set general and uniform standards for all religious communities, although several religious leaders expressed hope that one would be passed soon.

### *Religious Demography*

The religious breakdown of the country is approximately: Roman Catholic, 85 percent; Orthodox Christian, 6 percent; Muslim, 1 percent; Jewish, less than 1 percent; other, 4 percent; atheist, 2 percent. (These numbers are approximate because no national census has been conducted since 1991, before the recent conflict and its associated population shifts.) These statistics correlate closely with the country's ethnic makeup. The Orthodox can be found in Serb areas, notably cities and the war-affected regions, and other minority religions can be found mostly in urban areas. Most immigrants are Roman Catholic ethnic Croats. Protestants from a number of denominations and foreign clergy and missionaries actively practice and proselytize.

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

No formal restrictions are imposed on religious groups, and all religious communities are free to conduct public services and to open and run social and charitable institutions.

Facilitating the return of refugees is a challenge for the new Government, which has made progress in a number of areas relating to returns. However, many ethnic Serbs who wish to return to Croatia, including Serbian Orthodox clergy, continued to encounter difficulties in obtaining citizenship and travel documents. There were no reports of specific discrimination against Orthodox clergy beyond that faced by other ethnic Serb citizen refugees. However, religion and ethnicity are so closely intertwined in the country that it is difficult to distinguish between ethnic discrimination and religious discrimination against Serbs, who are Orthodox Christians, and against Muslims. A pattern of often open and severe discrimination continues against ethnic Serbs, and, at times, other minorities in a wide number of areas, including the administration of justice, employment, housing, and freedom of movement. The then-HDZ party government often maintained a double standard of treatment based on ethnicity. Although in recent years the Government had discriminated against a particular group of Muslims in the issuance of citizenship documents, the Government began recognizing their citizenship in autumn 1999. In the area of Topusko, most cases have been resolved of the approximately 2,500 Muslims who for several years were unable to obtain citizenship because their period of residency was interrupted by the military conflict.

Protestants and foreign clergy actively practice and proselytize, as do representatives of Eastern religions. Missionaries from a number of different groups are present in the country, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, Greek-Catholics, Pentecostals, Hare Krishnas, and a wide range of evangelical Protestant Christians (including Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Church of Christ, and various nondenominational organizations, such as the Campus Crusades for Christ).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints reported difficulties in obtaining missionary visas. It reported receiving only about 30 visas of a requested 50, resulting in several of its missionaries being obliged to work on a series of 90-day tourist visas. However, Baptist missionaries reported that their longstanding difficulties in obtaining missionary visas were resolved, in part due to pressure from the international community on the previous government, and they obtained the visas in fall 1999.

The Government requires that religious training be provided in schools, although attendance is optional. Schools filling the necessary quota of seven minority students per class offered separate religion classes for these students. In classes not meeting this quota, minority students could fulfill the religion requirement by bringing a certificate that they had received classes from their religious community. Generally, the lack of resources, minority students, and qualified teachers impeded catechism in minority faiths, and the Catholic catechism was the one predominantly offered. Although religious training is not obligatory, in the past some students reportedly felt pressured to participate. Jewish officials noted that basic information provided to students about Judaism was inaccurate, and their offers to improve the material continued to go unheeded.

Missionaries do not operate registered schools, but the Mormon community provides free English lessons, which normally are followed by some sort of religious class. The Muslim community has a secondary school in Zagreb; however, the Ministry of Education continued to refuse to recognize the diploma conferred upon graduation; a lawsuit to resolve the matter has not been decided. Approximately 20 students per year graduate from the school. In a positive development, in September 1999, the Government directed public schools that reached the minimum quota of Muslim students to sign work contracts with Muslim instructors. In the past, Muslim catechism instructors were not paid by the Government, whereas Roman Catholic catechism teachers were.



The Ministry of Defense employs 19 Catholic priests to minister to Catholics in the military. However, neither Orthodox nor Muslim clerics were given this opportunity. A Catholic priest is present and gives a blessing at the oath-giving ceremony upon entering the army, but other clerics have not been invited to participate.

The Catholic Church operates the country's only private national radio station, Catholic Radio, which is financed by private contributions. The Jewish community reports no restrictions on religious broadcasting. Jewish topics are covered periodically on weekly religious programming of state broadcaster Croatian State Radio and Television (HRT), for example, at times of Jewish holidays. The Muslim community has 4.5 minutes of radio broadcast time per month, as well as 4.5 minutes per month on Radio Zagreb. In addition, the Bairam ceremony from the Zagreb mosque is broadcast annually on television.

Muslims have the right to observe their religious holidays. They are granted a paid holiday for one Bairam and have the right to observe the other as well (although they are not paid for the day).

There is no government-sponsored ecumenical activity, nor is there funding for such efforts. Ecumenical activity is initiated by the religious leaders themselves (see Section II).

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in society, and many incidents of discrimination appear motivated by ethnicity rather than religion or religious doctrine.

The previous HDZ Government implemented property restitution in a discriminatory manner: the Government signed a concordat with the Vatican in 1998 that provided for the return of all Catholic Church property confiscated by the Communist regime after 1945. This agreement stipulates that the Government would return seized properties or compensate the Church where return is impossible. Some progress has been made with some returnable properties being restituted, but there has been no compensation to date for nonreturnable properties. Three other agreements with the Vatican regulate Catholic marriages, public school catechism, and military chaplains.

There have been no such agreements between the Government and other religious groups. The Orthodox community has filed several requests for the return of seized properties, and some cases have been resolved successfully, particularly cases involving buildings in urban centers. However, several buildings in downtown Zagreb have not been returned, nor have properties that belonged to monasteries, such as arable land and forest. This uneven progress may be the result of a slow judicial system rather than a systematic effort to deny restitution of Orthodox properties. In December 1999, the Government returned to the Jewish community a site in downtown Zagreb where the main synagogue was located until its destruction in World War II. However other Jewish properties, including some Zagreb buildings, have not been returned. The Jewish community identifies property return as one of its top priorities.

Catholic marriages are recognized by the State, eliminating the need to register them in the civil registry office. The Muslim and Jewish communities, seeking similar status, have raised this issue repeatedly with the Government, but there has been no resolution to date.

Dinko Sakic, commander of Croatia's Jasenovac concentration camp in 1944, was convicted in October 1999 of crimes against humanity and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, the maximum possible sentence. Sakic was extradited from Argentina in 1998. The Jasenovac camp, site of a memorial and museum, was badly damaged during the recent conflict and renovation is ongoing. In April 2000, a government delegation, led by the Minister of Culture, attended a commemoration ceremony there that also was attended by several leaders of ethnic and religious minority communities.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

Constitutional amendments passed in May 2000 added Bosnian Muslims and Albanians to the list of officially recognized minorities. Muslims were removed from this list by the previous government in 1998, despite being the second largest minority in the country after Serbs.

In April 2000, the new Government established a Commission for Religious Minorities under the authority of Deputy Prime Minister Goran Granic. This Commission replaced a similar, ineffective one under the previous regime. The new commission held its first session in April 2000 with representatives from several religious communities and government bodies, soliciting suggestions from the religious communities and presenting plans to draw up a law on religious minorities. However, only "traditional" denominations were invited to the first meeting, and smaller groups such as the Mormons and Hindus, were excluded. The Commission has not achieved concrete results to date.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Notions of religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in society, and religion often was used to identify non-Croats and to single them out for discriminatory practices. This caused religious institutions to be targets of violence. In the past 10 years, religious institutions of all faiths have been targets of violence. Such incidents still occur, particularly in the tense Danubian region (eastern Slavonia), where there were persistent reports of vandalism directed against Serb Orthodox buildings and cemeteries. Of 14 incidents recorded by international observers during the period covered by this report, at least 11 were directed against Serbs or Serb Orthodox structures, including the October 1999 assault on a 69-year old Orthodox priest who was beaten at a Vukovar bus stop by a Croat youth. The youth was arrested quickly and in November 1999 was convicted of "disturbing public order" and fined approximately \$80. Also, in December 1999, an Orthodox cemetery was vandalized in Vukovar; in January 2000, two crucifixes were damaged on the property of the local Orthodox priest in Tenja, and windows were broken at an Orthodox church in Borovo. No arrests were made in any of these incidents.

Two incidents of vandalism directed against Jewish structures were reported throughout the country, including the August 1999 damage to 15 headstones at a Jewish cemetery in Koprivnica and an April 2000 incident in which swastikas were painted on the wall of the Jewish center in Zagreb. No arrests were made in these cases.

Since Catholic Archbishop Bozanic took office in 1997, the Catholic Church has sought a more proactive role in advocating reconciliation. Catholic Radio includes a monthly program on ecumenism, inviting speakers from other religious communities. The Catholic Church has initiated several meetings with Orthodox clergy from Serbia, including a February 18, 2000, bishops' meeting at Novi Sad, Serbia. Bozanic has been active in publicly promoting the return of (mostly Serb Orthodox) refugees and in ecumenical reconciliation efforts.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Government actions have been aimed at encouraging the Government to respect religious freedom in practice and at supporting the efforts of the Catholic Church to foster a constructive environment in post-conflict society. The Secretary of State met with Archbishop Bozanic on February 18, 2000 and noted the positive role played by the Catholic Church during the period of transition to a new government. Embassy officials have frequent meetings at all levels with representatives of the ethnic Serb (Orthodox) community as well as the Jewish and Muslim communities and are engaged in the promotion of human rights, including the religious rights, of these groups. Embassy officials meet and hold frequent discussions at all levels with government officials about respect for religious freedom and issues of discrimination against religious communities. The Embassy is a leader of the "article 11 commission," a group of 21 international missions in the country that deals directly with issues of ethnic and religious reconciliation and human rights.

## CYPRUS

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The basic law in the Turkish Cypriot community also provides for freedom of religion, and the authorities respect this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both official policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion; however, there were a few instances of vandalism on unused religious sites, and one of arson on a mosque in the south.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the authorities in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The basic law in the Turkish Cypriot community also provides for freedom of religion and the authorities respect this right in practice. Turkish Cypriots residing in the south and Greek Cypriots living in the north are allowed to practice their religions.

Prior to 1974, Cyprus experienced a long period of intercommunal strife between its Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. In response, the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) began peacekeeping operations in March 1964. The island has been divided since the Turkish military intervention of 1974, following a coup d'etat directed from Greece. Since 1974 the southern part of the island has been under the control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. The northern part is ruled by a Turkish Cypriot administration. In 1983 that administration proclaimed itself the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC"), which is recognized only by Turkey.

The 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus specifies that the Greek Orthodox Church (which is autocephalous and not under the authority of the mainland Greek Orthodox Church) has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with its holy canons and charter. Similarly, the Constitution states that the Turkish Cypriot religious trust, the Vakf (the Muslim institution that regulates religious activity for Turkish Cypriots), has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with Vakf laws and principles. No legislative, executive, or other act can contravene or interfere in the Orthodox Church or the Vakf. Accordingly, both the Greek Orthodox Church and the Vakf are tax-exempt with regard to religious activity. According to law, they are required to pay taxes only on strictly commercial activity.

Three other religious groups are recognized in the Constitution: Armenian Orthodox; Maronite Christians; and Latins (Roman Catholics). They are exempt from taxes and are eligible, along with the Orthodox Church and the Vakf, for government subsidies to their religious institutions. No other religious group is recognized in the Constitution.

Religions other than the five recognized religions are not required to register with government authorities; however, if they desire to engage in financial transactions, such as maintaining a bank account, they must register as a nonprofit company, and most do so. The registration process involves submission through an attorney of an application that states the purpose of the nonprofit organization and provides the names of the organization's directors. Registration is granted promptly and many religious groups are recognized. Annual reports of the organization's activities are required. Such nonprofit organizations are tax-exempt.

In the northern part of the island, the Turkish Cypriot basic law refers specifically to a "secular republic," and provides for religious freedom; no specific religion is recognized in the basic law. However, based on the 1960 Constitution, the Turkish Cypriot religious trust (Vakf), which pays the costs of Muslim religious activities and the salaries of Muslim religious leaders, is tax-exempt in regard to its religious activities (the Vakf pays taxes on its commercial and real estate operations) and receives official subsidies. No other religious organization is tax-exempt or receives subsidies.

Religious organizations are not required to register unless they wish to engage in commercial activity or apply for tax-exempt status. There are no legal restrictions on missionary activity; however, such activity is rare and is monitored closely by Turkish Cypriot authorities.

##### *Religious Demography*

Approximately 96 percent of the population in the government-controlled area are Greek Orthodox. Approximately 0.5 percent are Maronite or Latin, slightly under 0.5 percent are Armenian Orthodox, and 3 percent belong to other groups; the latter category includes small groups of Cypriot Protestants and foreigners of all religious beliefs.

A January 1998 opinion poll indicated that about 48 percent of Greek Cypriots attend church services regularly, while 49 percent attend only for major religious holidays and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The remainder does not at-

tend religious services at all. Approximately 10 percent of the population in the north attend religious services regularly.

Ninety-nine percent of the Turkish Cypriot population are at least nominally Muslim. There is a small Turkish Cypriot Baha'i community. Approximately 650 Greek Cypriots and Maronites live in the north. They have freedom of worship, although there are complaints of vandalism of unused Orthodox churches and disagreements related to the assignment of Orthodox priests to work in the north. There are no longer restrictions on the right of Greek Cypriots resident in the north to visit Apostolos Andreas monastery. However, an application to replace a retiring priest has been pending for more than 3 years. Most other non-Muslims in the north are foreigners from Western Europe who are frequently members of the Roman Catholic or Anglican Church.

There are no prohibitions against missionary activity or proselytizing in the government-controlled area, and there is some Western Protestant missionary activity in this area. Although missionaries have the legal right to proselytize in both communities, missionary activities are monitored closely by the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church and by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot authorities. The Orthodox Church is suspicious of any attempts to proselytize among Greek Cypriots. On occasion the Greek Cypriot media has given extensive coverage to the activities of foreign missionaries, creating a chilling effect on those activities. The police may initiate investigations of religious activity based on a citizen's complaint under laws that make it illegal for a missionary to use "physical or moral compulsion" in an attempt to make religious conversions, or when missionaries may be involved in illegal activities that threaten the security of the republic, constitutional or public order, or public health and morals. There are occasional apprehensions under these laws resulting in publicity but no arrests. Foreign missionaries, like all other foreigners, must obtain and periodically renew residence permits in order to live in the country; normally renewal requests are not denied.

The Greek Orthodox religion is taught in all public primary and secondary schools in classes held twice per week in the government-controlled area. Parents can request that their children be excused from such instruction.

There is instruction in religion, ethics, and comparative religions in two grades of the primary school system in the Turkish Cypriot community. There is no formal Islamic religious instruction in public schools and no state-supported religious schools.

There is no government-sponsored inter-faith activity.

There is no inter-faith activity sponsored by the Turkish Cypriot authorities.

Both the Government of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot administration have constitutional or legal bars against discrimination. The basic agreement covering treatment of Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north and Turkish Cypriots living in the south remains the 1975 Vienna III Agreement. Among other things, this agreement provides for facilities for religious worship.

In May 2000, the Turkish Cypriot authorities eliminated the system of fees imposed in 1998 for crossing the buffer zone, although a 1 British pound processing fee remains in effect. Reciprocal visits to religious sites continue, with several thousand Greek Cypriots visiting the Apostolos Andreas monastery in the north on designated Christian religious holidays, and several thousand Turkish Cypriots visiting the Hala Sultan mosque in the south on certain Muslim religious holidays. In January 2000, both sides agreed to initiate a project to restore these two religious sites (see Section III).

In both the government-controlled areas and the Turkish Cypriot community there was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

In both the government-controlled areas and the Turkish Cypriot community there were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

In both the government-controlled areas and the Turkish Cypriot community there were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the authorities' refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are polite relations between the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church and the other religious communities in the south. In the north there are few non-Muslims, but there is no friction between them and the nominally Muslim population. However, there are complaints of vandalism of unused Orthodox churches (see Section

I.) Turkish Cypriots complain that unused mosques in the south have been treated similarly. A previously unknown Greek Cypriot nationalist organization claimed responsibility for an arson attack on a mosque in the south in August 1999. Damage was light, and the authorities pledged to repair the damage and increase protection of Muslim sites. No one has been arrested for the attack. There has been little effort at ecumenical activity. In recent years, an international conference on understanding among religions has been sponsored annually by a private foundation in the government-controlled areas; otherwise, there has been little interest in such activities either in the government-controlled areas or in the Turkish Cypriot community.

Religion is a significantly more prominent component of Greek Cypriot society than of Turkish Cypriot society, with correspondingly greater cultural and political influence. One example of the relationship between church and state among Greek Cypriots is the fact that the leader of the Greek Cypriot campaign for independence in the 1950s was the head of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Makarios III, who became President from independence in 1960 until his death in 1977.

As the largest owner of real estate in the south and the operator of several large business enterprises, the Greek Orthodox Church is a significant economic factor. Similarly, the Vakf is the largest landowner in the north.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy played a key role, working closely with the United Nations, in obtaining agreement from both sides in January 2000 to initiate a project to restore the island's two most significant religious sites, the Apostolos Andreas monastery and the Hala Sultan mosque. This agreement was announced by U.N. Secretary General Annan and welcomed immediately thereafter by Secretary Albright. Construction work is expected to begin in early 2001.

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officers have requested Turkish Cypriot authorities to facilitate the assignment of an additional Orthodox priest to the Greek Cypriot population living in the north. The Ambassador and other embassy officers also have met periodically with religious authorities as part of their regular responsibilities.

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## CZECH REPUBLIC

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Religious affairs are the responsibility of the Department of Churches at the Ministry of Culture. All religions officially registered with the Ministry of Culture are eligible to receive subsidies from the State, although some religions decline state financial support as a matter of principle and as an expression of their independence. There are 21 state-recognized religions, 2 of which have been registered since 1991; no groups currently are seeking to register. One group, the Unification Church (UC), was denied registration in January 1999 when the Department of Churches determined that it had obtained the required proof of membership by fraud; the UC is contesting the decision in court. To register a church must have at least 10,000 adult members permanently residing in the country. For any churches which the World Council of Churches has already recognized only 500 adult members permanently residing in the country are necessary. These churches receive the same legal and financial benefits from the Government as do other churches. Churches registered prior to 1991, such as the small Jewish community, are not required to meet these conditions. Unregistered religious groups, such as the small Muslim minority, may not own community property legally, but often form civic-interest associations

for the purpose of managing their property and other holdings until they are able to meet the qualifications for registration. The Government does not interfere with or prevent this type of interim solution. Unregistered religious groups are otherwise free to assemble and worship in the manner of their choice.

Churches receive approximately \$88.2 million (3 billion Czech crowns) annually from the Government. Funds are divided proportionately among the 21 registered religions according to membership and taking administrative costs into account. Of this sum, approximately \$1.5 million (539 million Czech crowns) is used to pay salaries to clergymen. The rest of the funding goes to state grants for church medical, charity, and educational activities, as well as for the maintenance of church memorials and buildings.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country has a largely homogenous population with a dominant Christian historical tradition. However, largely as a result of 40 years of Communist rule between 1948 and 1989, the vast majority of the citizens do not identify themselves as members of any organized religion. In a February 1999 opinion poll, only 35 percent claimed to believe in a higher spiritual power, and 64 percent identified themselves as atheists. There was a revival of interest in religion after the "Velvet Revolution" in 1989, but the number of those professing religious beliefs or participating in organized religion has fallen steadily since then in almost every region of the country.

An estimated 4.5 percent of the population of 10,286,621 (according to the 1998 Office of Statistics) attend Catholic services weekly. Most of these churchgoers live in the southern Moravian dioceses of Olomouc and Brno. The number of practicing Protestants is even lower (approximately 1 percent). Leaders of the local Muslim community estimate that there are 20,000 to 30,000 Muslims, although Islam has not been registered as an officially recognized religion since the communist takeover. Registration of Islam has been discussed with the Department of Churches, but there has been no formal application. The first mosque in the country was completed in Brno in July 1998. There is a second mosque in Prague. The Jewish community, which numbers only a few thousand, is an officially registered religion, since it was recognized by the State before 1989.

Missionaries for various religious groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses, are present and generally proselytize without hindrance. To work in the country, missionaries must obtain a long-term residence and work permit if they intend to remain longer than 30 days. Although permits are granted routinely, some religions increasingly have raised concerns about delays in processing visas and permits for visiting missionaries and clergy. There is no special visa category for religious workers, so foreign missionaries and clergy are required to meet the relatively stringent conditions for a standard work permit even if their activity is strictly ecclesiastical or voluntary in nature.

Religion is not taught in public schools, although a few private religious schools exist. Religious broadcasters are free to operate without hindrance from the Government or other parties, and no difficulties or problems in this area have been reported.

Members of unregistered religious groups can issue publications without interference.

There was no government-sponsored inter-faith activity.

In March 2000, in his last act before leaving office, Interior Minister Vaclav Grulich officially disbanded and canceled the registration of the National Alliance, an extreme right-wing, neo-Nazi organization whose leaders consistently have propagated anti-Semitic sentiment and publicly questioned the occurrence of the Holocaust.

During the period covered by this report, the two church-state commissions founded by the Government in March and May 1999 continued to meet regularly and work on outstanding issues including state funding for churches and property restitution, among other things. (One is a "political" commission with the presence of all parties currently in parliament, and the second is a "specialist" commission composed of experts including lawyers, economists, and church representatives. The commissions advise the Government on church-state relations, the status of churches and methods of their financing, and church-related property questions.) Members of the commission also have advised the Ministry of Culture on the Law on the Registration of Churches and Religious Groups, which the cabinet was expected to approve in July 2000.

Issues of religious-based communal and personal property restitution are still being resolved. Jewish claims date to the period of the Nazi occupation, while Catholic authorities are pressing claims to properties that were seized under the

former Communist regime. Although after 1989 the Government and Prague city officials returned most synagogues and other buildings previously belonging to religious orders, many claims to properties in the hands of other municipal authorities have not yet been resolved satisfactorily. Restitution or compensation of several categories of Jewish personal property is in progress. In addition the Catholic Church claims vast tracts of woods and farmlands.

The 1991 Law on Restitution applied only to property seized after the communists took power in 1948. In 1994 the Parliament amended the law to provide restitution of, or compensation for, property wrongfully seized between 1938 and 1945. This amendment provided for the inclusion of Jewish private properties, primarily buildings, seized by the Nazi regime. In the late 1990's, the Federation of Jewish Communities identified 202 communal properties as its highest priorities for restitution, although it had unresolved claims for over 1,000 properties. By decree the Government returned most of the properties in its possession, as did the city of Prague; however, despite a government appeal, other cities have not been as responsive. As of mid-2000, 68 of the 202 properties have been returned. In November 1998, the Government established a commission to document the status of former Jewish communal property and, to a limited extent, personal property, and to make recommendations to the Government. In June 2000, Parliament approved the commission's proposed legislation. The President was expected to sign the bill into law. This law would authorize the return of 200 communal Jewish properties in state hands. The same law also would authorize the Government to return more than 60 works of art in the National Gallery to the Jewish community and an estimated 2,500 works of art in the State's possession to individual Czech Jews and their descendants. A fourth provision of the law would authorize the return of certain agricultural property in the Government's possession to its original owners. In the spring of 1999, the commission's chairman, Deputy Prime Minister Pavel Rychetsky proposed a fund from which compensation would be paid for those properties that cannot be restituted physically; the Cabinet authorized approximately \$7.5 million (285 million crowns) for this fund. It is expected to be in operation by the end of 2000 and is to provide partial compensation in those cases where the Government needs to retain the property or is no longer in possession of it. Approximately two-thirds are to be dedicated to communal property and one-third to individual claims.

Certain property of religious orders, including 175 monasteries and other institutions, was restituted under laws passed in 1990 and 1991, but the return generally did not include income-generating properties. When the Social Democratic government came to power in August 1998, it halted further restitution of non-Jewish religious communal property, including a decision of the previous government to return 432,250 acres of land and some 700 buildings to the Catholic Church. The Government has not foreclosed the possibility of further return of additional Catholic and Protestant properties but has emphasized that it must be done through legislation enacted by Parliament rather than by executive decree. The Government has yet to prepare the necessary legislation. Discussions are continuing in the two church-state commissions on the form of an overall settlement of all outstanding issues to include restitution.

In March 2000, following three months of intense negotiations with representatives of the local Jewish community, representatives of international Jewish groups, and the Czech Insurance Company; the Government reached a framework agreement on the protection and preservation of the remnants of a medieval Jewish cemetery (believed to be the oldest in the country) uncovered in 1997 at a commercial construction site in downtown Prague. Remains of the cemetery, which was closed and razed in the 15th century, were uncovered by the insurance company on the site of its new headquarters. The Cabinet decided on March 29 to declare a block of soil on the site containing intact graves a cultural monument, to pay the insurance company compensation of approximately \$1 million (45 million Czech crowns) and to authorize as soon as possible the reburial on the site of the 120 sets of remains removed by archaeologists in 1999. Twenty-five other small parcels nearby, believed to contain intact graves from the same cemetery, also were designated a national cultural monument. However, some of the details implementing the agreement had not been resolved between the insurance company and the local Jewish community by the end of June. Meanwhile, construction resumed on the portion of the site exempt from the cultural monument decree at the beginning of June. The company intends to stabilize the preserved cemetery area by September 2000, so that remains previously removed can be reburied there.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations are generally amicable between the various religious communities.

The immigrant population is still relatively small. In 1998 over 970 persons from other countries were naturalized as citizens, the majority from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia. Immigrants have not reported any difficulties in practicing their respective faiths.

The Islamic Foundation estimates that 2,000 persons have attended "open door" days since the country's first mosque was completed in Brno in July 1998. Local Muslims and police agreed that there have not been any incidents of religious intolerance toward their community.

Several isolated anti-Semitic incidents occurred during the period covered by this report. In December 1999, in a display case in front of the extremist rightwing Republican Party headquarters in Decin, photographs of President Vaclav Havel, Prime Minister Milos Zeman, Parliamentary Speaker Vaclav Klaus, and other government officials, were labeled "Jewish Free Masons and Murderers of the Czech nation." The exhibit also presented a list of "Jews and Jewish half-breeds" active in politics that included the names of Havel, Zeman, Klaus, and others. The display was removed a few days later after a state prosecutor warned the party it could face criminal charges in connection with the incident. Also, at a rally in April 2000, members of the extreme National Alliance and Patriotic Front organizations threatened to deface or remove explanatory plaques installed in March on the historic Charles Bridge in Prague at the urging of the North American Board of Rabbis. The plaques, which are in Czech, English, and Hebrew, describe the origin of a medieval sculpture of Christ on the cross—one of many sculptures on the bridge—that has a Hebrew inscription on it that is offensive to Jews. (The Government canceled the registration of the National Alliance in March 2000—see Section I.)

In February 1999, police in Plzen arrested 12 leaders, producers, and distributors of racist, Fascist, and anti-Semitic materials. The raid also netted piles of Fascist and racist materials, including membership lists, indicating that the group was part of a large, well-organized movement with ties to groups in several other European countries. Those arrested were charged with supporting and propagating a movement dedicated to the suppression of the rights and liberties of citizens, an offense with a maximum penalty of 8 years in prison. Owners of firms that are found to have produced the Fascist and anti-Semitic materials seized in the raid could lose their operating licenses; however, legal action by the Government against these firms remains pending.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. efforts on religious issues have focused largely on encouraging the Government to resolve religious property restitution claims.

During 1999 the U.S. Government and embassy officials emphasized on numerous occasions to the Government the importance of returning property wrongfully taken from Holocaust victims, the Jewish community, and churches, or of fair and adequate compensation when return is no longer possible. Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Stuart E. Eizenstat testified about these issues before Congress in September 1999. The need for the Czech Republic to act was also the subject of remarks by U.S. delegates in Vienna at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the fall of 1999. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering raised the issue of compensation for Holocaust victims in meetings during his visit to Prague in February 2000. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright also voiced concern about compensation in a meeting with Foreign Minister Jan Kavan during her visit to the Czech Republic in March 2000. The Ambassador has been in close contact in particular with Deputy Prime Minister Rychetsky, who has championed the creation of a fund for Czech Holocaust victims. Embassy staff also met with members of Parliament and senators from the Christian Democratic Union, which is the most active party on issues of religious, particularly Catholic, communal property. A visit to Prague in January 2000 by the Executive Director and Deputy Director of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets served to highlight U.S. activities and boosted bilateral cooperation.

Beginning in late December 1999, the Embassy, the Department of State, and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad devoted consid-



erable effort to facilitate a mutually acceptable settlement of the longstanding dispute over a medieval Jewish cemetery recovered in 1997 at a commercial construction site in Prague (see Section I). The Embassy maintained close contact on this matter with the Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, and the Prague Jewish community. The Embassy met on occasion with the Czech Bishops' Conference as well as the Culture Ministry's Department of Churches. Embassy officials also responded to individual requests for assistance from Czech-American Holocaust victims seeking compensation. In addition, embassy staff worked closely with the staff of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to deepen existing relationships with relevant Czech Archives and Czech Holocaust Education Program offices.

## DENMARK

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government works together with the Danish Government to promote religious freedom throughout the world as part of a global effort to support human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is an official state religion. The Constitution stipulates that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the national church, and it is subsidized by the Government. However, no individual can be compelled to pay tax or provide financial support to the national church or any other religious organization. By 1969 11 other religious organizations had official recognition by royal decree (essentially the State's permission for a religious organization to perform religious ceremonies, for example, weddings, which have civil validity).

Since the implementation of the 1969 Marriage Act, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs has granted permission to clergy of 60 additional, nonrecognized religious organizations to perform marriages. The Marriage Act permits weddings to be performed "within other religious organizations," provided that one of the parties to the marriage belongs to the organization and the organization has clergy that have been granted permission to perform marriage by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Thus, religious organizations no longer need to obtain "recognition" as "approval" is given when the Ministry grants permission to perform weddings to specific religious organizations. Both recognized and approved religions enjoy certain tax exemptions. The approval process is not complicated or protracted.

In February 1998, the Government appointed an independent four-member council to prepare guidelines and principles for official approval of religious organizations. The government statement accompanying the action noted that the step was taken due to the growing number of applications in recent years for official approval as a religious organization.

In March 1999, the Council published guidelines for future approval of religious organizations that are linked to the 1969 Marriage Act. The guidelines established clear requirements that religious organizations must fulfill, including providing a written text of the religion's central traditions; descriptions of its most important rituals; an organizational structure accessible for public control and approval; and constitutionally elected representatives who can be held responsible by authorities. Additionally, the organization must "not teach or perform actions inconsistent with public morality or order."

Scientologists continue to seek official approval as a religious organization. Their first application for approval was made in the early 1980's and rejected; the second application was made in mid-1997 and withdrawn in early 1998. The second application was resubmitted in 1999 and withdrawn again in early 2000, shortly before a decision by the Government was expected. In withdrawing the application, the Church of Scientology asked the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs for additional time

to respond to reports about Scientology that had appeared in the Danish media. The Church of Scientology's application has been resubmitted, but, as of mid-2000, there was no information available about when the case would next be heard.

#### *Religious Demography*

Over 86 percent of the population adheres to the Evangelical Lutheran Church; it is the only church that receives government funds. Other religious organizations represent approximately 5 percent of the population, with Muslims, the next largest group, accounting for 2 percent of the population. The remaining 9 percent of the citizens are without a religion.

There are missionaries operating within the country, including representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses; however, there is no detailed information available on missionary activity. There are no restrictions on proselytizing so long as proselytizers obey the law and do not act inconsistently with public morality or order. All schools, including religious schools, receive government financial support. While the Evangelical Lutheran faith is taught in the public schools, a student may withdraw from religious classes with parental consent.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Denmark has a long history of welcoming religious minorities and affording them equal treatment. There are generally amicable relations between religious groups, although the recent influx of a substantial Muslim population has resulted in some tension with the majority population of adherents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Minority group unemployment tends to be higher, and allegations of discrimination on the basis of religion sometimes are raised. However, it is difficult to separate religious differences from differences in language and ethnicity, and the latter may be at least as important in explaining unequal access to well-paying jobs and social advancement. There are no significant ecumenical movements that promote greater mutual understanding and religious tolerance.

Scientology officials complain of unfair treatment by the press, particularly in its extensive coverage of the church in the months preceding the anticipated court decision of the Scientologists's application for recognition as a religious organization (see Section I).

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy worked together with the Government to promote religious freedom throughout the world as part of a global effort to support human rights.

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## ESTONIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. To date the single controversy is the internal division in the Orthodox faith. The Interior Ministry, which provides support to registered faiths through its Religious Affairs Department, has been seeking a solution to this ongoing debate.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The 1993 Law on Churches and Religious Organizations requires all religious organizations to have at least 12 members and to be registered with the Interior Ministry and the Board of Religion. Leaders of religious organizations must be citizens with at least 5 years' residence in Estonia. A new draft law on churches and congregations was introduced early in 1999, but the bill has yet to pass a first reading in the new Parliament elected in March 1999. Readings are expected to occur in fall 2000, with enactment expected in January 2001. The proposed legislation reflects a general reform trend in the law to simplify and clarify existing procedures. The draft law places responsibility for registry of religious organizations on the courts rather than the Interior Ministry. Upon passage of this law, all registries in the country would then fall under the auspices of the courts. Although some U.S. missionaries had expressed concerns in 1999 that a previous version of the legislation gave preferential treatment to the larger, established religious communities in the country, examination of the proposed legislation indicates that it does not provide preferential treatment to any church or group of churches.

Many groups have sent foreign missionaries into Estonia; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) being the largest. During the period covered by this report, no church or missionary group reported problems in obtaining the necessary residence permits.

A program of basic ecumenical religious instruction is available to public schools. However, public school participation presently exists in only 55 schools, with approximately 2,600 students participating. Those students in the 55 schools offering this ecumenical instruction who do not wish to participate have the option to take alternative courses. Private schools are allowed to provide religious instruction as well.

There is a process whereby religious and lay property is restored to its pre-Soviet occupation owners. In some cases properties are claimed by more than one group, complicating restitution efforts. The procedure for reclaiming property is generally considered fair but often is slow and bureaucratic.

*Religious Demography*

The majority of citizens are nominally Lutheran, and there is a large Orthodox community. A broad range of other creeds and beliefs make up a small but growing segment of the religious community. However, 40 years of communism diminished the role of religion in society. Many new neighborhoods built since the war do not have religious centers, and many of the surviving churches require extensive renovations. Church attendance, which had seen a surge coinciding with the independence movement in the early 1990s, now has plunged. Anecdotal evidence, garnered from local churches, indicates a 65 percent decrease in registered confirmations, for example.

In 1998 there were an estimated 165 congregations of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and over 80 Orthodox congregations, with 39 belonging to the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), 30 to the Russian Orthodox Church in Estonia, and 11 to the Union of Estonian Old Believer congregations. Lutherans and Orthodox believers account for the majority of believers. Nonetheless, there are smaller communities of Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and other Christian denominations. There is an active, if small, Jewish community. There are also communities of Muslims, Buddhists, and many other denominations and faiths. However, each of these minority faiths has less than 6,000 adherents. The 2000 census, once completed and published, would, for the first time, attempt to account for all religious groups, as well as atheists.

Persons of varying ethnic backgrounds profess Orthodoxy, including communities of Russian Old Believers who found refuge in Estonia in the 17th century. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), independent since 1919, subordinate to Constantinople since 1923, and exiled under the Soviet occupation, reregistered under its 1935 statute in August 1993. Since then, a group of ethnic Russian and Estonian parishes preferring to remain under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church structure imposed during the Soviet occupation has insisted that it should have claim to the EAOC name but has been unable to register under the same name. Representatives of the Moscow and Constantinople Patriarchates remain in contention on this issue. Interior Ministry attempts to broker an agreement have not been successful, and the Orthodox Church wing affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate in Estonia remains unregistered with the State. The unregistered status

of the Church makes negotiation and settlement of the issue problematic. However, throughout the dispute, free worship has occurred in practice. This dispute over whether the Orthodox Church should be subject to Moscow or Constantinople has taken on political overtones, as sensitivities remain from the 40-year Soviet occupation.

The country's small Jewish community was decimated during the Nazi occupation. It now numbers over 3,000 members and in January 2000 was granted land by the Government on which to build a synagogue. The community has recovered the Jewish school building and leaders say that property restitution is not an issue, as most pre-war religious buildings were rented, not owned.

Government officials have voiced concerns about extremist religious groups establishing themselves in Estonia. The Director of the Religious Affairs Department under the Ministry of Interior Affairs expressed his concern about Satanists planning to register their sect with the Government in accordance with the Law on Churches and Religious Organizations.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. Although the majority of citizens are nominally Lutheran, ecumenical services during national days, Christian holidays, or at public events are common. Tensions between the ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian populations occasionally do spill over into religious matters. Most of the country's Russian-speaking people profess Orthodoxy, while the Estonian majority is predominantly Lutheran.

Citizens are generally tolerant of new religions and foreign missionaries but are wary of those they regard as cults. Although such groups seem to cause some discomfort among citizens, there have been no problems noted. Government officials regard developments such as the Satanist group's recent announcement of its intention to register with the Religious Affairs Department as an indication of the group's intention to abide with the laws and government guidelines.

There is a deep-seated tradition of tolerance of other denominations and religions.

In 1998 there was an incident in which youths vandalized a Jewish cemetery. The police investigated and arrested the perpetrators. The Rabbi of Estonia attributed the incident to drunken hooliganism. During the period covered by this report, two instances of theft involving 40 religious icons occurred. There were no reports of vandalism. In the former case, the Interior Ministry provided funding to equip the parishes affected with alarm systems.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with a wide range of figures in Estonian religious circles. Embassy officials monitored the dispute over property issues involving the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church and met with representatives of both sides.

Embassy officials regularly visit religious sites in Tallinn and elsewhere in the country and are monitoring the reformulation in parliamentary committee of the new Law on Churches and Congregations.

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## FINLAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There are two state churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church. All citizens who belong to one of these state churches pay a church tax as part of their income tax. These church taxes are used to defray the costs of running the state churches. State churches also handle services such as recording births, deaths, and marriages, which normally would be handled by municipalities and counties. Those who do not want to pay the tax must inform the applicable state church that they are leaving that church. All religions are eligible for some tax relief (e.g., they may receive tax-free donations), provided they are registered with the Government as religious communities.

The Ministry of Education has outlined requirements for recognition of religious communities. Religious groups should have at least 20 members. The purpose of the group should be the public practice of religion, and the activities of the community should be guided by a set of rules. Forty-five of these communities currently are recognized as churches.

The Government's procedures for recognizing religious communities are still under review. The current Law on Freedom of Religion, which has been described as technically unclear, dates from 1923, and proposed amendments aim to clarify the requirements for recognizing and registering religious communities, and to increase opportunities to practice one's faith and to belong to several religious groups simultaneously. The government commission working on the amendments submitted an interim report to the Ministry of Education in October 1999. The amended law would—for the first time—define what it means to “profess” and “practice” a religion. The registration, as churches, of religious groups would be facilitated and their independence would be enhanced. The interim law also proposes that a separate law on funerals be passed. Under present practices, those not belonging to an established church often are subject to excessive burial expenses.

The proposed amendments also could benefit Scientology, which has failed to gain recognition as a religion. In December 1998, the Education Ministry turned down the application of the Finnish Association of Scientologists to be registered as a religious community. This was the first time in the country's history that an applicant had been denied church status. The Scientologists' application had been pending for nearly 3 years while the Government awaited additional information that it had requested from the Association. (The Association acknowledged that it had not followed up on the Government's request.) The Education Ministry's decision can be appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court. The Scientologists have not yet done so but have indicated that they intend to begin the process anew and reapply for recognition as a church.

*Religious Demography*

The majority of the population belongs to one of the two state churches. Eighty-six percent are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and 1 percent belong to the Orthodox Church. Twelve percent of the population do not belong to any religious denomination.

Nontraditional religious groups freely profess and propagate their beliefs. Such groups as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) have been active in the country for decades. Other groups include the Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish communities. However, the number of persons belonging to non-state religions totals only 1 percent of the population.

The proposed amendments to the Law on Religion also could change religious instruction in public schools. Currently, instruction in the tenets of the state religions is incorporated into the curriculum of all public schools. However, students who are not members of the state churches may substitute general classes on religion and philosophy. The new amendments would allow parents or guardians belonging to other faiths/denominations to decide in what religion their children should be instructed.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Active members of the state Lutheran Church attend services regularly, participate in small church group activities, and vote in parish elections. However, the majority of church members are only nominal members of the state church and do not participate actively. Their participation occurs mainly during occasions such as holidays, weddings, and funerals. The Lutheran Church's Information Center reports that in 1998 2 percent of members attended church services weekly, and 10 percent attended monthly. The average number of visits to church by church members was 1.7 during 1998.

Some citizens are not very receptive to proselytizing by adherents of nontraditional faiths, in part due to the tendency to regard religion as a private matter.

Nontraditional religious groups practice their religions freely. They are generally free from discrimination despite intolerant attitudes from some members of society.

There is an extremely small but growing immigrant population, whose members tend to practice different faiths than those of most citizens. Many immigrants are Muslims from Somalia. Immigrants do not encounter difficulties in practicing their faiths; however, they sometimes encounter random discrimination and xenophobia.

Various government programs available through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor focus on ongoing discrimination, including discrimination based on religion. Studies and research, integration programs, and recommendations for further incorporation of immigrants into society have been the focal points of these programs. Religion has not been highlighted, in particular, but remains a part of the Government's overall attempts to combat discrimination.

The state churches often speak out in support of the Finnish/Nordic welfare state model, couching social welfare state values in religious or moral terms.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy representatives periodically meet with representatives of the various religious communities (both mainstream and nontraditional) to discuss religious freedom issues.

## FRANCE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government—including the legislative branch—took some actions during the period covered by this report that affected religious minorities that it considers to be “sects.” The 1905 law on separation of church and state—the foundation of current legislation on religious freedom—makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith.

There was no change in the general status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations among the various religions are generally amicable; however, there were instances of threats and violence against members of religious minorities.

The U.S. Embassy maintained active contact with government officials on the issue of religious freedom.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government—including the legislative branch—took some actions during the period covered by this report that affected religious minorities that it considers to be “sects.” (A “cult” or “culte” is generally considered to be a “religion.” Cults are considered to be positive elements in society, while “sects” or “sectes” are defined as “persons who profess the same doctrine,” often with a negative connotation.) The 1905 law on separation of church and state—the foundation of current legislation on religious freedom—makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith.

The Government uses many categories to describe associations. Two of these categories apply to religious groups: “associations cultuelles” (associations of worship, which are exempt from taxes) and “associations culturelles” (cultural associations, which are not exempt from taxes). Associations in these two categories are subject to certain management and financial disclosure requirements. An association of worship can organize only religious activities, which are defined as liturgical services

and practices. It may not operate a school or employ a board president. A cultural association, on the other hand, is a type of association whose goal is to promote the culture of a certain group, including a religious group. Although a cultural association is not exempt from taxes, it may receive government subsidies for its cultural and educational operations (such as schools). Religious groups normally use both of these categories; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, for example, runs strictly religious activities through its association of worship and operates a school under its cultural association.

Religious groups must apply with the local prefecture to be recognized as an association of worship and, therefore, receive tax-exempt status for their religious activities under the 1905 statute. The prefecture, upon reviewing the documentation supplied regarding the association's purpose for existence, can then grant that status. In order to qualify, the purpose of the group must be solely the practice of some form of religious ritual. Printing publications, employing a board president, or running a school can disqualify a group from receiving tax-exempt status.

According to the 1905 law, associations of worship are not taxed on the donations that they receive. However, the prefecture can decide to review a group's status if the association receives a large donation or legacy that comes to the attention of the tax authorities. If the prefecture determines that the association is not in fact in conformity with the 1905 law, its status can be changed, and it can be required to pay a 60 percent tax rate on present and past donations.

According to statistics published by the Ministry of the Interior, 109 of 1,138 Protestant associations, 15 of 147 Jewish associations, and 2 of 1,050 Muslim associations currently have tax-free status. Roughly 100 Catholic associations are tax exempt; a representative of the Ministry of the Interior reports that the total number of non-tax-exempt Catholic associations is too numerous to estimate accurately.

For historical reasons, contrary to practice in the rest of the country, the Jewish, Lutheran, Reformed (Protestant), and Roman Catholic groups in three departments of Alsace-Lorraine enjoy special legal status in terms of taxation of individuals donating to these religious groups. Adherents of these four religions may choose to have a portion of their income tax allocated to their church in a system administered by the central government.

The State subsidizes private schools, including those that are affiliated with churches.

Central or local governments own and maintain religious buildings constructed before 1905, the date of the law separating church and state. In Alsace and Moselle, special laws allow the local government to provide support for the building of religious edifices. For example, in April 2000, the mayor of Strasbourg proposed granting a tract of land and subsidizing construction costs for a new mosque. The decision provoked controversy in the Muslim community, part of which supported a different project. In May 2000, the city council decided to support both projects.

#### *Religious Demography*

The Government does not keep statistics on religious affiliation. The vast majority of the population is nominally Roman Catholic, although many Catholics do not practice their faith actively. According to one member of the Catholic hierarchy, only 8 percent of the population are actually practicing Catholics. Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in number; Islam has approximately 4 million adherents in France. According to the Ministry of the Interior, there are 1,536 mosques or prayer rooms in metropolitan France. According to various estimates, about 6 percent of the country's citizens are unaffiliated; Protestants account for 2 percent; and the Jewish and Buddhist populations each account for 1 percent. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that 250,000 persons attend their services either regularly or periodically. According to various estimates, Orthodox Christians number between 80,000 and 100,000; the vast majority of these persons are associated with the Greek or Russian Orthodox Churches. The Jewish community numbers between 600,000 and 700,000 persons and is divided among Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox groups. According to press reports, up to 60 percent of the Jewish community celebrates at most only the high holy days such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. One Jewish community leader has reported that of the practicing Jews in the country, the largest number are Orthodox.

Religion is not taught in public schools. Parents may home school children for religious reasons, but all schooling must conform to the standards established for public schools. Public schools make an effort to supply special meals for students with religious dietary restrictions.

The Government has made efforts to promote inter-faith understanding. The Government also has strict anti-defamation laws prohibiting racially or religiously motivated attacks. For example, the Government has programs to combat racism and

anti-Semitism through public awareness campaigns, and by encouraging dialog between local officials, police, and citizen groups.

The Minister of the Interior has met periodically with various representatives of the Muslim community to encourage the creation of a Muslim council to discuss that community's religious concerns; however, internal divisions have prevented Muslim leaders from responding positively.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government's response to some minority groups that it views as "sects" has been to encourage public caution. In 1995 the National Assembly formed a parliamentary commission, known as the Gest or the Guyard Commission (after the names of its chairman and rapporteur respectively), to study so-called "sects." In 1996 the Commission issued a report that defined sects as groups that place inordinate importance on finances; cause a rupture between adherents and their families; are responsible for physical as well as psychological attacks on members; recruit children; profess "anti-social" ideas; disturb public order; have "judiciary problems;" and/or attempt to infiltrate organs of the State. Government officials have stated that "sects" are "associations whose structure is ideological and totalitarian and whose behavior seriously oppresses fundamental liberties as well as social equilibrium." (These attributes are in addition to specific criminal behavior prohibited by law.)

The Commission's report identified 173 groups as sects, including Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Scientology. The report was prepared without the benefit of full and complete hearings regarding the groups identified on the list. Groups were not told why they were placed on the list, and, because the document exists as a commission report to the National Assembly, there is no mechanism for changing or amending the list short of a new National Assembly Commission inquiry and report.

The ensuing publicity contributed to an atmosphere of intolerance and bias against minority religions. Some religious groups reported that their members suffered increased intolerance after having been identified on the list. The Commission's findings also led to calls for legislative action to restrict the activities of sects, which the Government rejected on grounds of religious freedom. Instead, the Justice Ministry issued a directive to all government entities to be vigilant against possible abuses by sects and to monitor potentially abusive sect activities.

In 1996 the Government created an interministerial working group on sects (known as the Observatory on Sects) to analyze the phenomenon of sects and to develop proposals for dealing with them. The working group's final report in 1996 made several proposals, including granting legal standing to organizations that oppose sects, thereby allowing them to initiate civil actions against sects; a modification of the law requiring associations to divulge information regarding the sources and management of their finances related to their effort to obtain tax-exempt status; a limit on the allocation of public campaign funds in order to limit public financial support for small fringe groups; the creation of a representative in each prefecture to provide information on sects to local officials; the creation of a permanent commission at the European Union level to reinforce international cooperation in controlling sect activities; and measures to restrict group members' entry into professional training programs.

In October 1998, the Government issued a new decree disbanding the Observatory on Sects and creating an "Interministerial Mission to Battle Against Sects" (mission interministérielle de lutte contre les sectes, or MILS). Although the decree instructs the MILS to "analyze the phenomenon of sects," it does not define what is meant by the term "sect," or how sects differ from religions. The MILS also is charged with serving as a coordinator of periodic interministerial meetings, at which government officials are to exchange information and coordinate their actions against sects.

On February 7, 2000, the Interministerial Mission for the Fight Against Sects submitted its first annual report to the Prime Minister, which addressed the perceived problem of "sects." Publication of the report had been delayed; according to press reports, the delay was due to government reservations about the content of the report, which reportedly advocated new legislation aimed at abolishing a number of so-called "dangerous sects." The Prime Minister's office, as well as some prominent government figures, publicly opposed such measures, citing concerns about the constitutional protection of "freedom of conscience." The report specifically raised the possibility of the dissolution of movements which, being "in essence and in action totalitarian" are dangerous to their members and to democracy in general. The report urged government action to deal with sects or cults according to their degree of dangerousness, such as groups that limit personal freedoms of members, "new age" groups, and "absolutist" groups that are totalitarian in nature. However,



the report did not advocate new legislation to abolish groups considered to be dangerous. The report presented two options: The use of criminal cases against individuals for violating existing laws, which rarely is done, and the use of existing administrative and political means—a 1936 decree against “factious leagues”—which would require action by the Council of Ministers and the assent of the President. The report specifically cited concerns regarding the Church of Scientology and the “Solar Temple” group.

In December 1998, a deputy introduced a private bill in the National Assembly that would allow anti-sect groups, classified as having “state-approved” (“*utilités publiques*”) status, to become parties to court actions involving sects. Its main provisions, with some modifications, were integrated into a separate bill on legal reform aimed at strengthening the presumption of innocence and victims’ rights. That bill, which became law in June 2000, allows associations that defend or aid an individual or a collective entity against a person or organization that is characterized as having the goal or the effect of creating or exploiting a psychological or physical dependence to have standing in judicial proceedings. Still further modifications of this law, which would limit this standing to associations classified as “*utilités publiques*,” are contained in pending legislation on “sects.”

In December 1998, the National Assembly created a new parliamentary commission to study the way that sects are financed. In June 1999, the National Assembly released its second report on “sects,” which addressed the finances of the groups. The report was based on questionnaires sent to groups listed as “sects” in the 1995 parliamentary report, requesting detailed information about the finances of these groups, including donations, investments, financial activities, and other sources of income. The report focused on multinational groups, especially Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Church of Scientology. The stated basis of concern was that these groups may use excessive or dishonest means to obtain donations, which then are transferred out of the country and beyond the reach of French tax authorities. The report also raised questions about volunteers, who should be compensated under the law for having provided uncompensated labor to “for-profit” organizations.

In March 2000, a Paris Correctional Court fined National Assembly Deputy Jacques Guyard, the president of the 1999 Parliamentary Commission of Inquiries Against Sects and a drafter of the 1996 National Assembly report on so-called “sects,” approximately \$16,500 (90,000 francs) in damages to three groups that were named in the June 1999 parliamentary report. These three groups—the Federation of Steiner Schools, the New Brotherly Economy, and “le Mercure Federal” (an anthroposophical medical association)—had charged Guyard with slander for labeling the groups as “sects” in a June 1999 television interview. The court found that Guyard had made accusations against these groups when existing evidence did not warrant even a serious inquiry into their activities. The court noted that the National Assembly report resulted from written declarations from persons claiming to be victims of anthroposophy, but that the Commission had not heard any of the claims in person, and that there was no supporting documentation for accusations that the groups had used mental manipulation, pressure to give money, or practical medicine that endangered lives. The court rejected Guyard’s later attempts to qualify his statements, and also rejected a request from Guyard’s lawyer for parliamentary immunity, stating that Guyard’s high position as head of the Commission would cause his remarks to have substantial influence on the public.

In June 2000, the National Assembly passed on its first reading a private bill that would tighten restrictions on religious and other organizations. This bill—which amended an earlier version that had originated in and had been passed by the Senate in December 1999—included the following clauses: (1) criteria for the dissolution of so-called “sects,” (2) the prohibition of sect publicity in “vulnerable” areas (i.e., near schools and hospitals), (3) prohibition of the reconstitution of dissolved “sects” under a different name, and (4) establishment of the new crime of “mental manipulation.” This bill was sent back to the Senate, where it may receive a second reading as early as late October 2000. However, various sources indicate that this proposed legislation, in its current form, is unlikely to become law prior to early 2001, if at all. The Justice Minister, who attended the National Assembly vote, noted that certain provisions of the bill would help “victims” of “sects,” but warned that other provisions might threaten fundamental liberties, such as freedom of association and belief. She questioned whether certain clauses were in conformity with the European Convention on Human Rights and called for a “parallel reflection” on these points to be organized by human rights groups when the Senate reconsidered the bill in the fall.

The Government has not outlawed any of the groups on the list; however, several groups have reported that they have experienced discrimination since the publication of the 1996 parliamentary commission report. For example, leaders of l’Institut

Theologique de Nimes (ITN), a private Bible college founded in 1989, claim that the institute and its members began experiencing discrimination in 1996, after the group was named on the 1995 list. The founder and leader, Louis Demeo, is head pastor at an associated church (Eglise Evangelique de la Grace), which also runs a private high school and a private primary school. However, the church itself was not named on the list. The Church of Scientology claims that its members have been targets of discriminatory behavior.

Local authorities often determine the treatment of religious minorities. For example, in April 1999, an official of a district of Paris refused in writing a request to stage an art exhibition on city property because of the applicant's affiliation with the Church of Scientology. The Association of the Triumphant Vajra also has been involved in a dispute with local officials over the building of a statue and a temple. Alleging unfair treatment on religious grounds, the association mounted a public campaign, which included an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, to prevent application of a Court of Cassation ruling upholding a lower court order to tear down a statue that allegedly had been erected without a permit.

Some observers are concerned about the scrutiny with which tax authorities have examined the financial records of some religious groups. According to the 1905 law separating church and state, religious associations are not taxed on voluntary donations that they receive, although all churches pay taxes on certain activities. Religious groups must differentiate between activities carried out as an association of worship ("cultuelle"), which are not taxed, and activities carried out as a cultural association, which are subject to tax. The Government currently does not recognize the Church of Scientology or some branches of Jehovah's Witnesses as qualifying religious associations, and therefore subjects them to a 60 percent tax on all funds that they receive.

In January 1996, the tax authorities began an audit of the French Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, and in May 1998, formally assessed the 60 percent tax against all donations received by Jehovah's Witnesses from September 1992 through August 1996. In June 1998, tax authorities began proceedings to collect the assessed tax, including steps to place a lien on the property of the National Consistory of Jehovah's Witnesses. The total amount claimed—including taxes, penalties, and interest—is over \$42 million (300 million francs). However, in June 2000, the Conseil d'Etat, the highest administrative court in the country, decided that two of the branches of Jehovah's Witnesses could be recognized as religious associations according to the 1905 law, and thus be exonerated from certain tax obligations. Separately, in July 2000, a Nanterre court decided against the French Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, confirming the necessity to pay the approximately \$42 million (300 million francs) in back-taxes to the fiscal authorities. The case was sent to an appeals court, and the tax proceeding continued throughout 2000.

Authorities also have taken action against the Church of Scientology. Tax claims asserted in 1994–95 against several Scientology churches forced them into bankruptcy. In the case of the Paris church, the Ministry of Finance refused to grant the church authorization to import funds to pay the claimed taxes even though the church offered to pay the total amount of all taxes assessed. In December 1997, the Government filed legal action for the claimed amount against former officers of the Paris church and against the Church of Scientology International (a California non-profit organization). The hearing in this legal action was deferred pending a decision regarding an administrative claim by the Paris church that the Minister of Finance acted improperly in refusing to allow the church to import funds to pay the assessed taxes. In January 1999, the Conseil d'Etat requested the advice of the European Court of Justice, and on March 14, 2000, the Court ruled that French law was incompatible with European Union laws regulating the free flow of capital. However, the Court ruled that such regulations could be allowed if required on the grounds of a threat to public security or public policy. The Conseil d'Etat overturned the tax assessment. However, the judgment's practical effect was limited because the affected churches had dissolved themselves and been reconstituted in the intervening period under different names.

A number of court cases have been initiated against the Church of Scientology. These cases generally involved former members who have sued the Church for fraud and sometimes for the practice of medicine without a license. According to representatives from the Church of Scientology, there also have been cases under the data privacy act brought against the group by former members who have continued to receive mailings from the parent church in the United States. A 1999 case in the Marseille Correctional Court received wide media attention after judicial officials admitted that 3.5 tons of documents pertaining to the case had been destroyed by mistake. In November 1999, the Marseille court in that case found a former local leader of the Church of Scientology and four other church employees guilty of fraud

for swindling money from former members. The court sentenced the local leader to 2 years in prison, of which 18 months were suspended and the remaining 6 months served prior to sentencing, and a fine of approximately \$16,700 (100,000 francs). The other four members received suspended sentences; charges against two other persons were dropped.

Problems experienced by Muslims appear to be based on cultural rather than on religious differences. Debate continues over whether denying some Muslim girls the right to wear headscarves in public schools constitutes a violation of the right to practice their religion. In 1989 the Conseil d'Etat ruled that the "ostentatious" wearing of these headscarves violated a law prohibiting proselytizing in schools. After much unfavorable media attention to the wearing of such headscarves, the Ministry of Education issued a directive in 1994 that prohibits the wearing of "ostentatious political and religious symbols" in schools. The directive does not specify the "symbols" in question, leaving school administrators considerable authority to do so. The Conseil d'Etat in 1995 affirmed that simply wearing a headscarf does not provide grounds for exclusion from school and subsequently struck down some decisions to expel girls for wearing headscarves. The decision about whether or not headscarves or other religious articles are "ostentatious" rests with the director of each school. Various reports indicate that, while some school directors permit the wearing of headscarves, others do not. Students are free to pursue their right to wear religious articles of clothing through the court system, and the courts have ruled upon a number of cases regarding headscarves. The outcome of these cases varies, and no national decision has yet been taken to rule definitively on whether or not the wearing of headscarves should be allowed.

Foreign missionaries must obtain a 3-month tourist visa before leaving their own country. Upon arrival missionaries must apply with the local prefecture for a *carte de séjour* (a document that allows a foreigner to remain in the country for a given period of time), and then must give the prefecture a letter from their sponsoring religious organization.

On October 21, 1999, the Court of Cassation upheld a Bordeaux court's 1998 conviction of Maurice Papon for his actions as secretary general of the prefecture of Gironde from 1942 to 1944. Papon was found guilty of complicity in committing crimes against humanity for his role in the deportation of hundreds of Jews to Nazi concentration camps during the World War II German occupation. The Bordeaux court had sentenced Papon to 10 years' imprisonment; however, he remained on bail pending the outcome of his appeal to the Court of Cassation. Just before that court's ruling, Papon fled to Switzerland. His failure to appear resulted in an automatic rejection of his appeal. On October 22, he was arrested in Switzerland and returned to France, where he remains in prison. According to press reports, his lawyer intends to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

There was no change in the general status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Inter-faith relations at a popular level are amicable.

The annual National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (NCCHR) report on racism and xenophobia, released in March 2000, noted an increase in the number of attacks against Jews after a steady downward trend since 1992, although the number of anti-Semitic threats continued to decline. In 1999 there were 9 reported attacks and 52 reported threats, compared with 1 and 73 respectively in 1998. The attacks recorded in 1999 occurred throughout the country and included three assaults, three acts of vandalism, and three attempts to set fire to synagogues. There were also occasional attacks on members of the large Arab/Muslim community.

The Conseil des Eglises Chrétiennes en France (CECEF), formed in 1987 and made up of three Protestant members, three Catholics, and three Orthodox Christians, serves as a forum for dialog among the major Christian churches. There is also an organized inter-faith dialog among the Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Jewish communities, which discuss and issue statements on various national and international issues. The Ministry of Interior has urged the creation of a Muslim council to discuss that community's religious concerns, but internal divisions have prevented Muslim leaders from responding positively.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintained active contact with government officials on the issue of religious freedom. Representatives from the Embassy have met several times with government officials and members of the Parliament. Embassy representatives also meet regularly with a variety of private citizens and nongovernmental organizations involved in the issue. Several other visiting officials, including Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Robert Seiple, also discussed religious freedom issues with senior French officials.

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**GEORGIA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, local police and security officials at times harassed foreign and local missionaries and their congregations.

Overall, in the period covered by this report there was a slight improvement in the status of religious freedom in some areas. Some lower courts sought to render more objective decisions in cases involving religious issues by remitting cases to expert panels.

The Government and the public generally do not interfere with traditional religions; however, there continued to be incidents in which politicians and local authorities either participated in or did not prevent harassment of nontraditional religious groups.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government and the Government has been cooperative, particularly in dealing with issues related to Jehovah's Witnesses.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, local police and security officials at times harassed foreign and local missionaries and their congregations. The Constitution recognizes the special role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the country's history, but also stipulates the independence of the Church from the State.

Throughout the country's history, the Georgian Orthodox Church has been a key rallying point for patriotic sentiment. The Church has lobbied Parliament and the Government for laws that would grant it special status and restrict the activities of missionaries from "nontraditional" (mostly Protestant evangelical) religions that might draw Orthodox believers, especially ethnic Georgians, away from it. The Georgian Orthodox Church enjoys a tax-exempt status not available to other religions. Various draft laws, some modeled on the Russian law on religion, have been introduced but thus far have not been adopted by Parliament. Currently, a concordat between the State and the Church, which would delineate the Church's rights and responsibilities, is also under consideration. A number of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) have criticized the proposed concordat. They argue that the concordat would grant the Church the status of a government ministry without the necessary accompanying oversight and that such a concordat would grant the Church too many powers in procurement, licensing, and property ownership. The Church also wants to have religious education in schools. Some NGO's have argued that the Government has supported the Georgian Orthodox Church through the state budget by financing poverty programs and reconstruction of churches.

There are no laws that require the registration of religious groups. However, religious groups that perform humanitarian works, the Salvation Army among them, must be registered as charitable organizations.

There are no statutes or regulations related specifically to religious freedom. Currently, there is a debate as to whether a legal regime is needed to complement the constitutional protections of freedom of religion and if so, what form it should take, for example, whether there should be concordats individually with each religion and group or a law applied universally.

*Religious Demography*

Most ethnic Georgians (approximately 70 percent of the population of 5 million, according to the 1989 census) nominally associate themselves with the Georgian Orthodox Church. Orthodox churches serving other non-Georgian ethnic groups, such as Russians and Greeks, are subordinate to the Georgian Orthodox Church but generally use the language of their communicants. In addition, there are a small num-

ber of (mostly ethnic Russian) believers from three dissident Orthodox schools: the Malakani; Storoveriy (Old Believers); and Dukhoboriy, the majority of whom have left the country. The period of Soviet rule saw a sharp decline in the number of active churches and priests, as well as a near-total absence of religious education. As a result, the level of religious practice is relatively low. Membership in the Georgian Orthodox Church has continued to increase since independence in 1991. It maintains 4 theological seminaries, 2 academies, several schools, and 27 church dioceses. According to the Church, it has 700 priests, 250 monks, and 150 nuns. The Church is headed by a Catholicos Patriarch, Ilya II, whose See is in Tbilisi.

Women and older persons predominate at the Church's services, and worshippers often only remain long enough to genuflect and light a candle. Financial restrictions limit the church's ability to train its clergy fully or perform any pastoral functions beyond the liturgy.

Like many other religious institutions during the Soviet era, the Georgian Orthodox Church largely was suppressed; many churches were destroyed or turned into museums, concert halls, and other secular establishments. As a result of the new policies of the Soviet Government toward religion in the late 1980's, the present Patriarch began reconsecrating churches formerly closed throughout the country. The Church remains very active in the restoration of these religious facilities and is lobbying the Government for the return of properties that were held by the Church before the Bolshevik Revolution. (Church authorities have claimed that 20 to 30 percent of the land at one time belonged to the Church.)

Several religions, including the Armenian Apostolic Church, traditionally have coexisted with Georgian Orthodoxy. A large number of Armenians live in the southern Javakheti region, where they constitute a majority of the population. Islam is prevalent among Azerbaijani and north Caucasus ethnic communities in the eastern part of the country and also may be found in the regions of Ajara and Abkhazia. Some 5 percent of the population are nominally Muslim. Judaism, which has been present since ancient times, is practiced in a number of communities throughout the country, especially in the largest cities of Tbilisi and Kutaisi. Approximately 8,000 Jews remain, following two large waves of emigration, the first in the early 1970's and the second in the period of perestroika during the late 1980's. Before that, Jewish officials estimate, there were as many as 100,000 Jews in the country. There are also small numbers of Roman Catholic and Lutheran worshipers among communities that settled in the country in the 17th to 19th centuries. A small number of Kurdish Yezidis have lived in Georgia for centuries.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Protestant denominations have become more prominent, including Baptists (composed of Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Ossetian, and Kurdish groups); Seventh-Day Adventists; Pentecostals (both Georgian and Russian); Jehovah's Witnesses (local representatives say that the group has been in the country since 1953 and has about 40,000 adherents); the New Apostolic Church; and the Assemblies of God. There are also a few Baha'is, and Hare Krishnas. There are no available membership numbers for these groups, but combined, their membership probably totals about 100,000 persons.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Some nationalist politicians continue to use the views and the institution of the Georgian Orthodox Church as their platform, and criticized some Protestant groups, especially evangelical groups, as subversive. Jehovah's Witnesses in particular are the subject of attacks from such politicians.

In April 1999, a nationalist parliamentarian opened a court case against Jehovah's Witnesses, seeking to ban the group on the grounds that it presents a threat to the State and the Georgian Orthodox Church. Lawyers for Jehovah's Witnesses argued that the suit violates the Constitution and appealed to a higher court to have the case thrown out. The Supreme Court dismissed the challenge in June 1999, and the case was heard. On February 29, 2000, the IsaniSamgori district court dismissed the lawsuit based on the opinion of an expert academic panel. The case was appealed to the Tbilisi district appeals court and on June 23, 2000, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiff. Jehovah's Witnesses planned to appeal.

Many of the problems among traditional religious groups stem from arguments over property. The Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches have been unable to secure the return of their churches and other facilities closed during the Soviet period, many of which later were given to the Georgian Orthodox Church by the State. A prominent Armenian church in Tbilisi remains closed and the Roman Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church, as is the case with Protestant denominations, have had difficulty obtaining permission to construct new churches, reportedly in part as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church. Georgian Orthodox Church authorities have accused Armenian believers of purposely al-

tering some existing Georgian churches so that they would be mistaken for Armenian churches. At present, these groups are taking such arguments to court. The Catholic Church did complete successfully the construction of a new church in Tbilisi in 1999 and one in Batumi in June 2000.

The Jewish community also experienced delays in the return of property confiscated during Soviet rule. A former synagogue, rented from the Government by a theater group, was ordered by the courts to be returned to the Jewish community in 1997. The theater group refused to comply and started a publicity campaign with anti-Semitic overtones to justify its continued occupation of the building. In December 1998, President Shevardnadze promised Jewish leaders that the synagogue would be returned before the 2,600-year celebration of Jewish settlement. However, the President's order was not enforced, and the building remains in the hands of the theater group. The theater group has brought suit, claiming that the building was never a synagogue. The court remitted the issue to a panel of experts for evaluation. In May 2000, the panel informed the court that it had come to a split decision on whether the building had been a synagogue. The court reconvened on June 29, 2000 but had not rendered a ruling by the end of the period covered by this report.

Pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church on the Ministry of Education prevented the use of school textbooks to which the Church objected (see Section II). By law all school textbooks must be approved by the Ministry of Education, in consultation with various ministries and the office of the Patriarch. Two textbooks were refused licenses due to the disapproval of the Georgian Orthodox Church. In one case, the office of the Patriarch vetoed the textbook, and the Ministry of Education therefore refused to grant the license. In the other, the Ministry of Education granted the license, but a committee of concerned Orthodox parents, which the office of the Patriarch publicly acknowledged was its creation, successfully sued the Ministry of Education to rescind the license.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Freedom of Religion*

Members of a number of Protestant—particularly evangelical—organizations continued to be detained or otherwise harassed by local police. These groups also reported some incidents of harassment outside Tbilisi by Georgian Orthodox priests and their supporters. They also complain of instances when either the local police failed to intervene in a mob situation or the Procuracy failed to move court cases forward (see Section II). Many observers believe that the local police have the sanction, or think that they have the sanction, of the central Government for their actions. Although Jehovah's Witnesses note a decrease in harassment by local police, they argue that local officials have changed their strategy and now employ new tactics, attempting to provoke verbally Jehovah's Witnesses rather than initiating the harassment themselves.

On October 17, 1999, a worship service of 120 parishioners in the Gldani district of Tbilisi was attacked violently by members of a renegade Georgian Orthodox group. (The leader of this group was excommunicated from the Church due to his radical and often confrontational stance.) The Gldani police refused to intervene. Sixteen persons were injured in the attack. On December 25, 1999, the case was forwarded to the Gldani prosecutor's office for criminal charges. Despite the advocacy by the National Security Advisor for human rights on Jehovah's Witnesses behalf, in January 2000, the Gldani regional prosecutor's office returned the case to the city prosecutor's office, stating that no violation had occurred. The group continues to press for prosecution of the police's behavior in this and similar subsequent incidents. Instead the official in charge of the investigation decided in June 2000 to charge one of the plaintiffs with hooliganism (see Section II).

Several members of another evangelical group, the Assemblies of God, were beaten and abused verbally by police officials while conducting outdoor services in the Gldani region of Tbilisi in May 1999. The officials sought to obtain the names of the church members. The group asserts that it continues to be under local police surveillance. A number of members of the congregation were hesitant to return to their apartments and cars for a few days. In September 1999 the group brought suit against the police and lost. The group alleged that the leader of a radical Orthodox group exerted pressure on the court. The appeal was pending in the Supreme Court as of June 30, 2000.

In August 1999, public services by four evangelical Protestant congregations in Tbilisi were brought to a halt as a result of hostility from the police and radical Orthodox activists. The churches were able to resume public services only after the October 1999 parliamentary elections, because the police confiscated the documentation they needed to rent appropriate premises, although in the intervening period they continued to hold small-scale services in private apartments. The police raided

three Tbilisi meeting places in late August 1999, halting services then in progress at two of them. President Eduard Shevardnadze publicly condemned these acts but as of mid-2000 there were no reports of any investigation of the police involved. As of mid-2000 there were no reports that any Protestant congregations in Tbilisi were unable to worship publicly.

In December 1999, Jehovah's Witnesses requested permission from the city of Tbilisi to use its sports palace in July 2000 for a convention. In April 2000, the city denied permission. In conversations with group leaders, city officials indicated concern for the safety of the attendees. Jehovah's Witnesses appealed this decision. The group speculates that the city denied permission due to fear of pressure from the Orthodox Church.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners in the area of the country under the control of the Government.

Regular and reliable information about the "Republic of Abkhazia," which is not recognized by any country and over which the Government of Georgia does not exercise control, is difficult to obtain. The Abkhaz "President," Vladislav Ardzimba, issued a decree in 1995 that banned Jehovah's Witnesses in Abkhazia. It remains in effect. A number of members of Jehovah's Witnesses have been detained subsequently. Five persons who were detained in April 1999 for violating the decree were released in early May 2000 after their counsel argued that their detention violated a freedom of conscience clause in the Abkhaz Constitution. According to a representative of Jehovah's Witnesses, none were detained at the end of the period covered by this report.

Overall, in the period covered by this report there was a slight improvement in the status of religious freedom in some areas. Some lower courts sought to render more objective decisions in cases involving religious issues by remitting cases to expert panels. The National Security Council representative for human rights as well as the parliamentary Committee for Human Rights were effective advocates for religious freedom and intervened successfully on a number of occasions. During the period covered by this report, religious organizations and NGO's noted that such efforts by elements within the judiciary to improve the overall protection of religious freedom, although the Procuracy remains unresponsive unless pressure is exerted. There was still harassment of Protestant evangelical groups by local officials, especially police, in certain areas. In some cases, the officials apparently were influenced by the Georgian Orthodox Church.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There are no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The Georgian Orthodox Church withdrew its membership from the World Council of Churches in 1997 in order to appease clerics strongly opposed to some of the Council's requirements and methods of operation and thereby avert a schism within the Church. Some senior church leaders remain highly exclusionary and emphasize theirs as the "one true faith." Some Protestant groups—especially evangelical groups—have been criticized by church officials and nationalist politicians as subversive. Eleven leaders of the Georgian Orthodox Church have argued that Christian missionaries should confine their activities to non-Christian areas. Orthodox priests and their supporters, other religious groups, local police, and security officials at times reportedly harassed missionaries in rural areas and small towns, as well as Tbilisi (see Section I).

According to some local human rights groups, as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church the Ministry of Education prevented the use of two school textbooks on the history of religion because they did not give absolute precedence to Orthodox Christianity (see Section I).

The public's attitude towards religion is ambivalent. Even though many residents are not particularly observant, the link between Georgian Orthodoxy and Georgian ethnic and national identity is strong. One local NGO believes that the public's tolerance of evangelical groups is decreasing, which is being exploited by nationalistic politicians. However, a number of members of the liberal intelligentsia regard the Church as a bastion of conservative chauvinism. Some NGO's advocate removing the clause in the Constitution concerning the Church's special role, claiming that it contradicts the Constitution's provisions regarding religious freedom.

The Islamic and Jewish communities report that they have encountered few societal problems. There is no pattern of anti-Semitism. Jewish leaders attribute iso-

lated acts of anti-Semitism, including the publication of anti-Semitic newspaper articles and the destruction of Jewish communal property, to the country's general instability and disorder. In the past, President Shevardnadze has made statements criticizing anti-Semitic acts. There has been little evidence of Islamic fundamentalist activity.

Pope John Paul II visited Tbilisi in November 1999 and was received warmly. The Armenian Catholicos also visited the country in May 2000.

The occasional instances of religious intolerance are a reflection of prejudice by church officials and ignorance of or disregard for the law by certain local police and political authorities.

In May and June 1999, nationalist groups (i.e., supporters of former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia) protested plans to send an exhibition of artifacts and religious relics to the United States. The Patriarchate also publicly objected to the exhibit. In the period prior to the October 1999 parliamentary elections, opponents increased the pressure with hunger strikes and public protests. The President decided to cancel the exhibition.

In August 1999, hostility from police and radical Orthodox activists halted services by four evangelical Protestant congregations (see Section I).

In the winter and spring of 2000, followers of Jehovah's Witnesses were attacked four times in the Gldani district of Tbilisi by radical Orthodox activists. On April 19, 2000, in four different places in the western part of the country, members of Jehovah's Witnesses were attacked and the police failed to intervene.

Nationalistic politicians have manipulated the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in particular to excite public hostility. In April 2000, one politician inaccurately publicized the case of a hospitalized member of Jehovah's Witnesses who refused certain forms of medical treatment. The event was covered widely in the press and sparked a brief public debate over religious beliefs and medical ethics.

On May 18, 2000, a radical religious group, called the Basilists after their leader, Father Basilia, held a rally in front of Parliament to protest the activities of non-traditional religious groups and NGO's.

Religious groups and observers believe that the media's coverage of religious issues improved, to varying degrees; however, most agree that the media often is biased in favor of the Georgian Orthodox Church and uneducated on the issues being discussed.

In June 2000, ethnic Armenians blocked persons, including the Patriarch, from entering a Georgian Orthodox Church in Ninotsminda, a predominately ethnic Armenian city in the south. Both the Patriarch's office and government representatives from the area believe that the incident was socially, and not politically or religiously motivated.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has sought to encourage the resolution of complaints from religious groups that allege harassment by local authorities, pointing out the importance of religious freedom. The Embassy attended some court sessions of the Jehovah's Witnesses court case. In addition, the Embassy promotes local awareness of religious freedom by meeting regularly with officials from local and international NGO's working on the issue. During the period covered by this report, the Embassy discussed religious freedom issues with representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church, and of the Jewish, Islamic, and Protestant faiths. In addition, the Embassy was in contact on these issues with local and international human rights organizations, as well as with government officials from the legislative and executive branches who are concerned with religious and human rights issues.

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## GERMANY

The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable. The Government does not recognize Scientology as a religion and views it as an economic enterprise. Concerns that Scientology's ideology is opposed to a democratic state have led to the screening of firms and individuals in some sectors of business and employment.



The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The status of Scientology was the subject of many discussions. The U.S. Government has maintained consistently that the determination that any organization is religious is for the organization itself. The U.S. Government has expressed concerns over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation and over the potential for discrimination in international trade posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible affiliation with Scientology.

Many religions and denominations have been granted public corporation status. Among them are the Lutheran and Catholic Churches and Judaism, as well as the Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mennonites, Baptists, Methodists, Christian Scientists, and the Salvation Army. The Berlin state government has denied Jehovah's Witnesses public corporation status.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

Religious organizations need not be registered. Most religious organizations are registered and treated as nonprofit associations and, therefore, enjoy tax-exempt status. State level authorities review these submissions and routinely grant this status. Organizations must register at a local or municipal court and provide evidence (through their own statutes) that they are a religion and thus contribute socially, spiritually, or materially to society. Local tax offices occasionally conduct reviews of tax-exempt status.

Church and state are separate, although historically a special partnership exists between the State and those religious communities that have the status of a "corporation under public law." If they fulfill certain requirements, including assurance of permanency, size of the organization, and an indispensable loyalty to the State, organizations may request that they be granted "public corporation" status, which, among other things, entitles them to levy taxes on their members that are collected for them by the State. Organizations pay a fee to the Government for this service. Not all public corporations avail themselves of this privilege. The decision to grant public corporation status is made at the state level. State governments also subsidize various institutions affiliated with public corporations, such as church-run schools and hospitals.

State subsidies also are provided to some religious organizations for historical and cultural reasons. Some Jewish synagogues have been built with state financial assistance because of the State's role in the destruction of synagogues in 1938 and throughout the Nazi period. Repairs to and restoration of some Christian churches and monasteries are undertaken with state financial support because of the expropriation by the State of church lands in 1803 during the Napoleonic period. Having taken from the churches the means with which they earned money to repair their buildings, the State recognized an obligation to cover the cost of those repairs. Subsidies are paid only to those buildings affected by the 1803 reforms. Newer buildings do not receive subsidies for upkeep.

##### *Religious Demography*

No census that could provide official statistics on religions and creeds has been conducted since 1987. However, unofficial estimates and figures provided by the organizations give an approximate breakdown of the current membership of the country's denominations. The Evangelical Church, which includes Lutheran, Uniate, and Reformed Protestant Churches, has 27.4 million members, who constitute 33.4 percent of the population. Statistical offices in the Church estimate that 1.1 million church members (or 4 percent) attend weekly religious services. The Catholic Church has a membership of 27.4 million or 33.4 percent of the population. According to the Church's statistics, 4.8 million Catholics (or 17.5 percent) actively participate in weekly services. Muslims make up approximately 3.7 percent of the population, or about 3 million persons.

Orthodox churches have approximately 1.1 million members, or 1.3 percent of the population. The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest, with approximately 450,000 members. The Romanian Orthodox Church has 300,000 members. The Serbian Orthodox Church has 200,000 members. The Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate has 50,000 members, while the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has approximately 28,000 members. The Syrian Orthodox Church has 37,000 members, and the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church has 35,000 members.

Other Christian churches have approximately 1 million members, or 1.2 percent of the population. These include Adventists with 35,000 members, the Apostolate of Jesus Christ with 18,000 members, the Apostolate of Judah with 2,800 members, the Apostolic Community with 8,000 members, Baptists with 87,000 members, the Christian Congregation with 12,000 members, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) with 39,000 members, the Evangelical Brotherhood in Germany with 7,200 members, Jehovah's Witnesses with 165,000 members, Menonites with 6,500 members, Methodists with 66,000 members, the New Apostolic Church with 430,000 members, Old Catholics with 25,000 members, the Salvation Army with 2,000 members, Seventh-Day Adventists with 53,000 members, the Union of Free Evangelical Churches with 30,500 members, the Union of Free Pentecostal Communities with 16,000 members, the Temple Society with 250 members, and the Quakers with 335 members.

Jewish congregations have approximately 75,000 members and make up 0.1 percent of the population. According to press reports, the country's Jewish population is growing rapidly, and more than 100,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union have joined the country's 30,000 Jews since 1990. Authorities in the Cologne-based Federal Administrative Office note that the pace of Jewish emigration from Russia has increased in recent months.

The Unification Church has 850 members; the Church of Scientology has 8,000 members; the Hare Krishna society has 5,000 members; the Johannish Church has 3,500 members; the International Grail Movement has 2,300 members; Ananda Marga has 3,000 members; and Sri Chinmoy has 300 members.

Approximately 21.8 million persons, or 26.6 percent of the population either have no religious affiliation or belong to smaller religious organizations.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Federal and state governments do not restrict the right to worship. Difficulties sometimes arise between churches and state over tax matters.

Jehovah's Witnesses are appealing to the Constitutional Court an April 1993 decision of the Berlin state government that denied the church public corporation status. In 1997 the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin upheld the Berlin state government's decision. The court concluded that the group did not offer the "indispensable loyalty" toward the democratic state "essential for lasting cooperation" because, for example, it forbade its members from participating in public elections. The group does enjoy the basic tax-exempt status afforded to most religious organizations.

In March 2000, the Stuttgart administrative court dismissed a suit filed by a Muslim woman who was denied a teaching position in Baden-Wuerttemberg because she insisted on wearing a traditional headscarf in the classroom. The Baden-Wuerttemberg Minister of Education took the position that the scarf was a political symbol of female submission rather than a religious practice prescribed by Islam, and that the political act of donning a headscarf was unacceptable for a teacher as a role model. The minister permitted the woman to conduct the practice teaching required for her degree, but argued that allowing a teacher to wear a headscarf on the job would violate the religious and political neutrality legally required of all civil servants, including teachers. The court's decision emphasized the need for teachers to maintain religious neutrality and viewed the woman's insistence on wearing the headscarf as an indication that she was unsuited for teaching in Baden-Wuerttemberg public schools. The woman appealed the ruling; she is now a teacher at a public school for Muslims in Berlin, where she is allowed to wear a headscarf. In September 1999, the Lower Saxony Ministry of Education barred a teacher in Lower Saxony from wearing a headscarf in the classroom. She filed suit against the ruling. The case continued at mid-2000. Nonetheless, Muslim students are free to wear headscarves to school.

Several states have published pamphlets detailing the ideology and practices of nonmainstream religions. States defend the practice by noting their responsibility to respond to citizens' requests for information about these groups. While many of the pamphlets are factual and relatively unbiased, others may harm the reputations of some groups through innuendo and inclusion in a report covering known dangerous cults or movements. Scientology is the focus of many such pamphlets, some of which warn of alleged dangers posed by Scientology to the political and economic system, and to the mental and financial well being of individuals. For example, the Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution published "The Intelligence Service of the Scientology Organization," which outlines its claim that Scientology tried to infiltrate governments, offices, and companies, and that the church spies on its opponents, defames them, and "destroys" them.

The Church of Scientology remained under scrutiny by both federal and state officials who contend that its ideology is opposed to democracy. Since 1997 Scientology has been under observation by the federal and state Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (OPC), “watchdog” agencies tasked with monitoring groups whose ideologies are deemed to be counter to the democratic order. (One state, Schleswig-Holstein, did not implement observation, since its constitution does not permit such activity.) In observing an organization, OPC officials seek to collect information, mostly from written materials and firsthand accounts, to assess whether a “threat” exists. More intrusive methods would be subject to legal checks and would require evidence of involvement in treasonous or terrorist activity. Federal OPC authorities stated that no requests had been made to employ more intrusive methods, nor were any such requests envisioned. Observation is not an investigation into criminal wrongdoing, and no criminal charges have been brought against Scientology by the Government.

In April 1998, an OPC agent was arrested by Swiss police after interviewing a contact in Basel while gathering information on Scientologists living in Baden-Wuerttemberg. The Government apologized, and in November 1999, he was convicted and sentenced to a 30-day suspended jail sentence for carrying out “illegal business of a foreign state.”

In November 1998, the federal OPC concluded that although there was no imminent danger for the political system or the economy of infiltration by Scientology, there were nevertheless indications of tendencies within Scientology, supported by its ideology and programmatic goals, which could be seen as directed against the country’s free and democratic order. The June 1998 report to Parliament of the commission established in 1996 to investigate “so-called sects and psycho-groups,” including Scientology, concluded that the Government should inform the public about dangers to health and property posed by psychocults and groups. The report did not classify Scientology as a religion, but as a profit-oriented psycho-group with totalitarian internal structures and undemocratic goals and recommended that observation of Scientology continue.

The interministerial group of mid-level federal and state officials that exchanges information on Scientology-related issues continued its periodic meetings. The group published no report or policy compendium during the period covered by this report and remains purely consultative in purpose.

In April 2000, the federal OPC concluded in its 250-page annual report for 1999 that the reasons for initiating observation of Scientology in 1997 were still valid. The six pages covering Scientology described the organization’s political ideology that is deemed to be anti-democratic. Employing quotes from the writings of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology pamphlets and books to justify its conclusions, the OPC asserted that Scientology’s goal was the establishment of a civilization where basic rights would be granted only to “non-aberrant” individuals (those who are “cleared” by means of Scientology’s technologies). Only “non-aberrant” persons would be allowed to marry and bring children into the world. In the Scientology social system, there would be no human or basic rights that could be used as a defense against the State, nor would there be an independent judiciary. An intelligence organization, not bound by law, would conduct inquiries and take preventive and repressive measures.

Government authorities contend that Scientology is not a religion but an economic enterprise and, therefore, sometimes have sought to deregister Scientology organizations previously registered as nonprofit associations and require them to register as commercial enterprises. In December 1999, the Stuttgart administrative court ruled that the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg could not deregister the Church of Scientology as an ideological nonprofit organization, stating that Scientology’s economic activities could not be classified as commercial if such activities were used to accomplish the organization’s ideological purposes. The state appealed the decision. In August 1999, the city of Munich revoked the nonprofit status of the local Scientology organization. In June 1999, the Munich administrative court rejected an appeal by Scientology and upheld the November 1995 decision by the city of Munich to deprive the Scientology-affiliated Celebrity Center Munich of its status as a nonprofit organization. With the exception of the Church of Scientology in Baden-Wuerttemberg, no Scientology organization in Germany has tax-exempt status.

Scientologists continued to report discrimination because of their beliefs. A number of state and local offices share information on individuals known to be Scientologists. Some local, state, and federal agencies, businesses (including major international corporations), and other organizations require job applicants and bidders on contracts to sign a declaration, commonly referred to as a “sect-filter,” stating that they are not affiliated with the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard or used the technologies of L. Ron Hubbard. (However, the term “sect filter” is misleading be-

cause the declarations are Scientology specific and in practice do not refer to any other group; they could more accurately be described as "Scientology filters.") The Government imposed the use of such declarations on companies bidding on contracts to provide training courses. In April 2000, the Hamburg administrative court dismissed the suit of two Scientology members against the city-state of Hamburg for its use of "sect filters." Some state governments also screen companies bidding contracts relating to training and the handling and processing of personal data. The private sector has followed the example set by the federal government and on occasion has required foreign firms that wish to do business in the country to declare any affiliation that they or their employees may have with Scientology. The Federal Property Office has barred the sale of some real estate to Scientologists, noting that the federal Finance Ministry has urged that such sales be avoided, if possible. Scientologists reported employment difficulties, and, in the state of Bavaria, applicants for state civil service positions must complete questionnaires detailing any relationship that they may have with Scientology. Bavaria identified some state employees as Scientologists and has required them to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire specifically states that the failure to complete the form will result in the employment application not being considered. Some of these employees have refused, and at least one has filed suit in the local administrative court. The case is pending. However, according to Bavarian and federal officials, no state employees in Bavaria lost a job or was denied employment solely because of association with Scientology; Scientology officials confirm this statement.

In a well-publicized court case, a higher social court in Rheinland-Pfalz ruled in January 1999 that a Scientologist was allowed to run her au pair agency, for which the state labor ministry had refused to renew her license in 1994, solely based on her Scientology membership. The judge ruled that the question of a person's reliability hinges on the person and not on membership in the Church of Scientology. The ruling is under appeal by the state labor office. No damages had been awarded as of June 30, 2000.

Scientologists have taken grievances to the courts. Legal rulings have been mixed. Some individuals who had been fired because they are Scientologists sued their employers for "unfair dismissal." Several have reached out of court settlements with employers.

In 1998 the Church of Scientology filed a suit in Berlin to enjoin the Berlin interior ministry from the alleged practice of bribing members of Scientology to "spy" on other members. The case is pending.

At the end of 1999 and continuing into early 2000, Hamburg's Sect Commissioner expressed public concern about Microsoft's Windows 2000, because one of its software functions was developed by a firm whose chief executive officer is a Scientologist. Although the federal Office for Security in Information Technology (BSI) has not yet made an investigation of the software, some Federal government offices are procuring Windows 2000.

Scientology held exhibitions in a number of cities to explain the church to citizens and encountered serious difficulties. In Frankfurt in February 2000, a Scientology exhibit in the cafe of a well-known, city-owned museum sparked significant criticism, with city officials speaking out against Scientology and the exhibit. However, Scientology's recently-established information office in Frankfurt has generated little or no public controversy. In March 2000, a Scientology exhibit at the Leipzig book fair provoked complaints about what some visitors considered aggressive marketing tactics in the hall, and Leipzig authorities are reviewing whether to allow the exhibitors to return next year. In April 2000, Scientology was able to rent the public congress center in Hannover for a 2-day exhibition, after a hotel withdrew its reservation upon learning it was a booking for a Scientology event.

The Federal Press and Information Office's Visitor's Bureau intervened in April 2000 with a Berlin hotel, forcing the hotel to cancel Scientology's reservations for rooms for an exhibit titled "What is Scientology?" The hotel claimed that the Visitor's Bureau threatened to cancel several hundred thousand dollars worth of reservations if Scientology were allowed to exhibit in the hotel.

Most major political parties continued to exclude Scientologists from membership, arguing that Scientology is not a religion but a for-profit organization whose goals and principles are anti-democratic and thus incompatible with those of the political parties. However, there has been only one known instance of enforcement of this ban. A Bonn state court upheld the practice in 1997, ruling that a political party had the right to exclude from its organization those persons who do not identify themselves with the party's basic goals.

The right to provide religious chaplaincies in the military, hospitals, and prisons is not dependent on the public corporation status of a religious community. The Ministry of Defense currently is reviewing the possibility of Islamic clergymen pro-

viding religious services in the military, although none of the many Islamic communities has the status of a corporation under public law.

The right to provide religious instruction at public schools also is no longer confined to religious communities with public corporation status. In November 1998, the Berlin Higher Regional Court ruled that the Islamic Federation had to be given the opportunity to provide religious instruction in the Berlin public schools even though it was not a corporation under public law. The decision drew criticism from the many Islamic organizations not represented by the Islamic Federation. The state of Berlin appealed the ruling on the grounds that the Islamic Federation is not a religious organization. The state has expressed its concerns about the Islamic Federation's alleged links to Milli Gorus, a radical Turkish organization classified as an extremist organization by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The court ruled against Berlin in February 2000. Berlin authorities are now reviewing applications submitted by the Islamic Federation to begin classes for Islamic religious education in Berlin public schools.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Germany is becoming an increasingly secular state. Regular attendance at religious services is decreasing. After over four decades of Communist rule, Eastern Germans had become far more secular than their Western cousins. Church representatives note that only 5 to 10 percent of Eastern Germans belong to a religious organization.

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable. Several major political parties generally hold ecumenical religious services prior to beginning their national conventions. Religious organizations and political and educational foundations hold seminars and discussion panels to promote interreligious understanding.

Religious broadcasters have access to the media. For example, television carries many programs produced by mainstream and minority religious groups.

Anti-Semitic acts decreased 28 percent, with 433 incidents reported in the first 9 months of 1999, compared with 522 during the same period in 1998. These incidents included, in part, 314 cases involving distribution of anti-Semitic materials or the display of symbols of banned organizations, 27 cases of desecration of cemeteries, and 12 cases of bodily injury.

Holocaust Memorial Day wreaths to commemorate Holocaust victims in Leipzig were burned shortly before midnight on January 27, 2000. (Five wreaths and several flower bouquets had been placed in a ceremony presided over by Leipzig's lord mayor and attended by a number of local officials.) Two days later, approximately 150 demonstrators peaceably gathered to express their outrage over what happened. Local authorities criticized the burning but have not determined who ignited the fire. In April 2000, a young man affiliated with a radical rightwing political party was arrested for throwing a Molotov cocktail at the synagogue in Erfurt the week before. No one was injured and the damage was minor. The overwhelming majority of the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts were frustrated, largely apolitical youths and a small core of rightwing extremists.

There was no progress as of mid-2000 in the investigation of the 1998 bombing of the grave of Heinz Galinski, chairman of the Jewish Community of Berlin until his death in 1992.

Scientists continued to report instances of societal discrimination (see Section I). In Stuttgart in March 2000, the efforts of Scientology members to promote an exhibit in the city's pedestrian shopping zone led to complaints from individual citizens who were offended by the Scientists' efforts to talk to them.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The status of Scientology was the subject of many discussions. The U.S. Government has expressed its concerns over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation and over the potential for discrimination in international trade posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible Scientology affiliation. U.S. Government officials have discussed with state and federal authorities U.S. concerns about the violation of individual rights posed by the use of declarations of Scientology affiliation. U.S. offi-

cials frequently have made the point that the use of such “filters” to prevent persons from practicing their professions, solely based on their beliefs, is an abuse of their rights, as well as a discriminatory business practice.

## GREECE

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the prevailing religion, but also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice; however, while the Government generally respects this right, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles or encounter legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that non-Orthodox rites of worship may not disturb public order or offend moral principles.

Overall, leaders of minority religions noted a general improvement in government tolerance during the period covered by this report, citing fewer detentions for proselytizing, the conscientious objector law, and an effective, well-run Ombudsman’s office, which successfully handled an increasing number of cases related to religious freedom.

Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity. In the minds of many Greeks, an ethnic Greek is also Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation. The Government’s decision in the summer of 2000 to remove a notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards sparked a national debate on the role of the Church in Greek society.

The U.S. Embassy has worked consistently to promote religious freedom. Embassy officers meet regularly with workinglevel officials responsible for religious affairs in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education and Religious Affairs. Officers from the Embassy and the Consulate General in Thessaloniki also meet regularly with representatives of various religious groups, including the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic communities.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the prevailing religion, but also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice; however, while the Government generally respects this right, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles or encounter legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that non-Orthodox rites of worship may not disturb public order or offend moral principles.

The Orthodox Church wields significant political and economic influence. The Government, under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Religion, provides some financial support by, for example, paying the salaries of clergy, subsidizing their religious training, and financing the construction and maintenance of Orthodox Church buildings.

The Orthodox Church is the only religion considered by law to be a “legal person of public law.” Other religions are considered “legal persons of private law.” In practice a primary distinction is that establishment of other religions’ “houses of prayer” is regulated by the general provisions of the Civil Code regarding corporations. For example, non-Orthodox churches cannot, as religious entities, own property; the property must belong to a specifically created legal entity rather than to the church itself. In practice this places an additional legal and administrative burden on non-Orthodox religious community organizations, although in most cases this process has been handled routinely. In July 1999, the Parliament passed a law extending legal recognition to Catholic churches and related entities established prior to 1946.

Two laws from the 1930s require recognized or “known” religious groups to obtain house of prayer permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship. By law the Ministry may base its decision to issue permits on the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop. No formal mechanism exists to gain recognition as a known religion, but Ministry officials state that they no longer obtain the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop when considering “house of prayer” permit applications. According to the Ministry officials, applications for additional houses of prayer are numerous and are approved routinely. The only pending application for recognition as a known religion at the Ministry is one submitted in February 2000 by the Scientologists of Greece. Although the deadline mandated by law

for processing the applications is 3 months, as of the end of June 2000, the Ministry had not yet determined whether it would recognize the Scientologist community as an "official" religion.

A tax bill passed in 1997 created, among other things, 3 new taxes on all churches and other nonprofit organizations. Leaders of some non-Orthodox religious groups claimed that all taxes on religious organizations were discriminatory, even those that the Orthodox Church has to pay, since the Government subsidizes the Orthodox Church, while other groups are self-supporting.

#### *Religious Demography*

Approximately 94 to 97 percent of the country's 10.6 million citizens adhere at least nominally to the Greek Orthodox faith. With the exception of the Muslim community (some of whose rights and privileges as well as related government obligations are covered by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne), the Government does not keep statistics on the size of religious groups. Ethnic Greeks account for a sizeable percentage of most non-Orthodox religions. The balance of the population is composed of Muslims (officially estimated at 98,000, though some Muslims claim up to 110,000 countrywide); accurate figures for other religious groups are not available. Protestants, including evangelicals, are estimated at 30,000; Jehovah's Witnesses at 50,000; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) at 300; Catholics at 50,000; Jews at 5,000. Scientologists claim 12,000 members. Approximately 250 members of the Baha'i Faith are scattered throughout the country, the majority of which are Greek citizens of non-Greek ethnicity. There are also Anglicans, Baptists, and nondenominational Christians. The old Calendarists separated from the Orthodox Church in 1924 and continued to follow the Julian calendar. There are no convincing estimates of their numbers. There is no official or unofficial estimate of atheists.

The majority of noncitizen residents practice religions other than Greek Orthodoxy. The largest of these groups is the Albanians (approximately 600,000 including legal and illegal residents). An estimated two-thirds of these persons nominally adhere to Islam.

Greek Catholics reside particularly in Athens and on the islands of Syros, Tinos, Naxos, and Corfu, as well as in the cities of Thessaloniki and Patras. Immigrants from the Philippines and Poland also practice Catholicism. The Bishop of Athens heads the Roman Catholic Holy Synod.

Protestant groups constitute the second largest religious group after the Greek Orthodox Church. Some groups, such as the evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses, consist almost entirely of ethnic Greeks. Other groups, such as the Latter-Day Saints and Anglicans, consist of an approximately equal number of ethnic Greeks and non-Greeks.

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which is still in force, gives Muslims in western Thrace the right to maintain social and charitable organizations ("wakfs") and provides for muftis (Islamic judges and religious leaders with limited civic responsibilities) to render religious judicial services.

The Muslim population, concentrated in western Thrace with small communities in Rhodes, Kos, and Athens, is composed mainly of ethnic Turks but also includes Pomaks and Roma. The approximately 10,000 member Muslim community in Athens (composed primarily of economic migrants from Thrace) is without its own mosque and a state-appointed cleric to officiate at various religious functions, including funerals. Members of the Muslim community often transport their deceased back to Thrace for religious burials to take place. In June 2000, the Parliament approved a bill allowing construction of the first Islamic cultural center and mosque in the Athens area. Mosques operate freely in western Thrace and on the islands of Rhodes and Kos. Construction of a long-delayed mosque in Kimmeria, Thrace was completed in 1998, though its minaret remained unfinished. The issue is one of local sensitivities rather than religious motivation, and the religious operation of the mosque has not been affected.

Scientologists, most of whom are located in the Athens area, practice their faith through the Center for Applied Psychology (KEFE), a registered nonprofit philosophical organization.

The Jewish community numbers approximately 5,000 adherents; the majority is of Greek ethnicity and lives in the Athens and Thessaloniki regions. In October 1999, a rededication of a synagogue in Hania, Crete as a house of prayer and a cultural center was marred by public criticism of the event by the regional governor. The Minister of National Education and Religion, and other government and Greek Orthodox officials lent their support to the rededication.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Several religious denominations reported difficulties in dealing with the authorities on a variety of administrative matters. Privileges and legal prerogatives granted to the Greek Orthodox Church are not extended routinely to other recognized religions. The non-Greek Orthodox churches must make separate and lengthy applications to government authorities on such matters as gaining permission to move places of worship to larger facilities. In contrast, Greek Orthodox officials have an institutionalized link between the church hierarchy and the Ministry of Education and Religion to handle administrative matters.

The Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa's order of nuns) together with other organizations offering charitable services, reported difficulty in renewing their visas because the Government does not have a distinct religious workers' visa category. The Government, by virtue of the Orthodox Church's status as the prevailing religion, recognizes de facto its canon law. Similarly, the Catholic Church in 1999 unsuccessfully sought government recognition of its canon law (the official "constitution" of the Church).

As part of new obligations under the Schengen Treaty and the Treaty of Amsterdam, all non-European Union citizens face a more restrictive visa and residence regime than they did in the past. Due to the absence of a religious worker visa category, non-Greek citizen clergy reported difficulty renewing their visas during the period covered by this report. As of the end of June 00, no progress was made on issuing visas for foreign clergy to perform their religious work in Greece.

Differences remain within the Muslim community and between segments of the community and the Government over the means of selection of muftis. Under a 1991 law, the Government appointed two muftis and one assistant mufti, all resident in Thrace. The appointments to 10-year terms were based on the recommendations of a committee of Muslim notables selected by the Government. The Government argued that it must appoint the muftis, because in addition to religious duties, they perform judicial functions in many civil and domestic matters under Muslim religious law, for which the State pays them.

Some Muslims accept the authority of the two officially appointed muftis; other Muslims, backed by Turkey, have "elected" two muftis to serve their communities (although there is no established procedure or practice for "election"). The Government has convicted one of the elected muftis 11 times over 4 years for usurping the authority of the official mufti. All of the sentences remain suspended pending appeal. The other elected mufti, who was convicted in 1991 of usurping the authority of the official mufti, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights. In December 1999, the court ruled that the conviction violated his freedom of religion and self-expression, but it avoided the question of his legal status as mufti.

Controversy between the Muslim community and the Government also continues over the management and self-government of the wakfs (Muslim charitable organizations) regarding the appointment of officials as well as the degree and type of administrative control. A 1980 law placed the administration of the wakfs in the hands of the appointed muftis and their representatives. In response to objections from some Muslims that this arrangement weakened the financial autonomy of the wakfs and violated the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, a 1996 presidential decree put the wakfs under the administration of a committee for 3 years as an interim measure pending resolution of outstanding problems. The interim period was extended in 1999.

Muslim activists complained that the Government regularly assesses taxes against the property of the wakfs. Under a national land and property registry law that came into full effect in January 1999, the wakfs, as with all property holders, must register all their property with the Government. The law permits the Government to seize any property that the owners are not able to document; there are built-in reporting and appeals procedures. The wakfs were established in 1560; however, due to the destruction of files during the two world wars, the wakfs are unable to document ownership of much of their property. They have not registered the property, so they cannot pay assessed taxes. To date the Government has not sought to enforce either the assessments or the registration requirement.

In January 1998, a law providing an alternative form of mandatory national service for conscientious objectors (for religious and ideological reasons) took effect. It provides that conscientious objectors may work in state hospitals or municipal services for 36 months. Conscientious objector groups generally characterized the legislation as a "positive first step" but criticized the 36-month alternative service term, which is double the regular 18-month period of military service. Since January 1998, all members of Jehovah's Witnesses (both clergy and laymen) who wished to submit applications for alternative nonmilitary service have been permitted to do so. Still pending resolution are 18 religiously based conscientious objector cases of those in-



dividuals who were in the process of contesting a prison term for refusing to serve in the military and whose cases were not covered by the 1998 law. In April 2000, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of a conscientious objector who, after serving a prison sentence in lieu of military service, was later barred from employment because of his record.

Jehovah's Witnesses also noted one case during the period covered by this report in which custody of two children was awarded to a Greek Orthodox parent, in part due to the fact that the other parent was a member of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witness parent was also denied visitation rights.

Evangelical parishes are located throughout the country. Members of missionary faiths report difficulties due to anti-proselytizing laws. Church officials express concern that anti-proselytizing laws remain on the books, although such laws no longer hinder their ministering to the poor and to children. In December 1999, the Government, applying legislation covering radio and television broadcasts, shut down an evangelical radio station over a technical issue on transmission frequency; however, it legally resumed operation a few months later once the case was adjudicated.

According to the president of the KEFE, the Scientologists chose to register as a philosophical organization because legal counsel advised that the Government would not recognize Scientology as a religion. In a step toward gaining recognition as a religion, Scientologists applied for a house of prayer permit in late February 2000. The application is still pending at the Ministry of Education and Religion.

In 1999, a defrocked former Greek Orthodox priest, after exhausting appeals stemming from a 1994 case for usurpation of religious authority, paid a fine in lieu of jail time.

A human rights group reported that in Thessaloniki and in some villages, the municipality has refused to record the conversion of former Orthodox believers to another religion.

Religious instruction in Orthodoxy in public primary and secondary schools is mandatory for all Greek Orthodox students. Non-Orthodox students are exempt from this requirement. However, Jehovah's Witnesses have reported some instances of discrimination related to attendance at religious education classes or other celebrations of religious or nationalistic character. Members of the Muslim community in Athens are lobbying for Islamic religious instruction for their children. The neighborhood schools offer no alternative supervision for the children during the period when religious issues are taught. The community has complained that this forces the parents to have their children attend Orthodox religious instruction by default.

The Government decided in the summer of 2000 to remove a notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards. This sparked a national debate on the role of the Church in Greek society. For example, the issue led Archbishop Christodoulos to organize religious protest rallies in Thessaloniki and Athens in June 2000. Both demonstrations drew over 100,000 supporters. Archbishop Christodoulos vociferously criticized the Government and planned to collect signatures to petition the Government to allow religious affiliation as an option on national identity cards.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Freedom of Religion*

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints state has about 80 missionaries in the country each year, for approximately 2-year terms. Church leaders report that their permanent members (nonmissionaries) do not encounter discriminatory treatment. However, police occasionally detained Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses (on average every 2 weeks) after receiving complaints that the individuals were engaged in proselytizing. In most cases, these individuals were held for several hours at a police station and then released with no charges filed. Many reported that they were not allowed to call their lawyers and that they were abused verbally by police officers for their religious beliefs. There were no proselytizing-related court cases during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners apart from the problems of temporary police detention experienced by Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.

In Thessaloniki, in late 1999, the Government Tax Office refused to recognize the Jehovah Witnesses as a nonprofit association and imposed an inheritance tax for property willed to them. The individuals appealed the decision in 2000, and as of mid-2000, the case still was pending.

Unlike in the past, there were no reports of assertions by Muslim leaders that the Government routinely withheld permission from Muslims seeking to change their legal residence, which determines where they vote, from rural to urban communities within western Thrace or from elsewhere in Greece to Thrace.

*Improvements in Freedom of Religion*

Overall, leaders of minority religions noted a general improvement in government tolerance during the period covered by this report, citing fewer detentions for proselytizing, the conscientious objector law, and an effective, well-run ombudsman's office, which successfully handled an increasing number of cases related to religious freedom.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity. Many attribute the preservation of Greek national identity to the actions of the Greek Orthodox Church during approximately 400 years of Ottoman rule and the subsequent nation building period. The Church wields significant social, political, and economic influence; it owns a considerable, although undetermined, amount of property.

In the minds of many Greeks, an ethnic Greek is also an Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation. Non-Orthodox citizens have claimed that they face career limits within the military, police, and fire-fighting forces, and the civil service, due to their religions. In the military, generally only members of the Greek Orthodox faith become officers, leading some members of other faiths to declare themselves Orthodox. Few Muslim officers have advanced to the rank of reserve officer and there are reports of pressure exerted on Greek Orthodox military personnel not to marry in the religious ceremony of their non-Orthodox partner, lest they be passed over for promotion.

Members of minority faiths have reported incidents of societal discrimination, such as local bishops warning parishioners not to visit clergy or members of minority faiths and neighbors, requesting that the police arrest missionaries for proselytizing. However, with the exception of the Muslim minority of western Thrace, most members of minority faiths consider themselves satisfactorily integrated into society. Organized interaction between religious communities is infrequent.

Some non-Orthodox religious communities believe that they have been unable to communicate with officials of the Orthodox Church and claim that the attitude of the Orthodox Church toward their faiths has increased social intolerance towards their religions. The Orthodox Church has issued a list of practices and religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical Protestants, Scientologists, Mormons, Baha'is, and others, which it believes to be sacrilegious. In 1999 there was an incident in which local Orthodox clergy and local government officials mobilized to demolish a government-approved house of prayer in the process of construction by Jehovah's Witnesses in Halkidiki in northern Greece. The incident was resolved swiftly through the intervention of police forces. Officials of the Orthodox Church have acknowledged that they refuse to enter into dialog with religious groups considered harmful to Greek Orthodox worshipers; church leaders instruct Orthodox Greeks to shun members of these faiths.

Economically, the Muslim minority in Thrace lags behind the rest of Greece. During the period covered by this report, there were no claims of discriminatory denial of Muslim applications for business licenses, tractor ownership, or property construction. The development of basic public services (electricity, telephones, paved roads) in Muslim neighborhoods and villages continues in many cases to be significantly slower than the development of such services in non-Muslim areas.

The percentage of Muslims employed in the public sector and in state-owned industries and corporations is disproportionately lower than the percentage of Muslims in the population. In Xanthi and Komotini, while Muslims hold seats on the prefectural and town councils, there are no Muslims among regular employees of the prefecture. Muslims in western Thrace claim that they are hired only for lower level, part-time work. According to the Government, lack of fluency in written and spoken Greek and the need for university degrees for high-level positions limit the number of Muslims eligible for government jobs.

The Treaty of Lausanne provides that the Muslim minority has the right to Turkish-language education, with a reciprocal entitlement for the Greek minority in Istanbul (now reduced to about 3,000). Western Thrace has both Koranic and secular Turkish-language schools. In the past, Government disputes with Turkey over teachers and textbooks had caused these secular schools serious problems in obtaining faculty and teaching materials in sufficient number and quality; however, this

is no longer a problem. In January 2000, 19 new Turkish-language textbooks approved jointly by the Governments of Greece and Turkey were distributed in the schools, the first such distribution since 1974. There were no complaints during the period covered by this report that the Government tried to prevent Turkish teachers (who serve under a 1952 reciprocal educational protocol) from performing their duties. Approximately 8,000 Muslim children attended Turkish-language public schools and an additional 150 attended two bilingual middle schools with a religious curriculum. Approximately 600 attended Turkish-language secondary schools, and approximately 1,600 Muslim students attended Greek-language secondary schools. Many Muslims reportedly attended high school in Turkey, due to the limited number of places in the Turkish language secondary schools, which are assigned by lottery. In 1999 the Government instituted a European Union-funded program for teaching Greek as a second language to Muslim children, primarily in the Greek-language schools, to improve their academic performance and chance of obtaining postsecondary education in the country.

Government incentives encourage Muslim and Christian educators to reside and teach in isolated villages. However, in August 1999, the Ministry of Education reformed the hiring system for teachers, which previously was based on seniority and prior service as a temporary teacher. As a result, Christian educators lost the incentive to reside and teach temporarily in isolated and border villages, which in the past secured priority in hiring. However, teachers and civil servants in border areas continue to receive a special allowance and pay lower taxes.

The law permits the Minister of Education to give special consideration to Muslims for admission to universities and technical institutes. The law requires universities and technical institutes to set aside places for Muslim students each year; 376 spaces were available in 1999. Under this law, 123 Muslim students entered Greek universities and technical institutes in 1999. Approximately 1,700 other Muslim students entered via the national examination process open to all citizens who attend universities and technical schools.

Vandals desecrated the Holocaust monument and a synagogue in Thessaloniki in April 2000, and defaced gravestones in the Jewish cemetery and Holocaust memorial in Athens with anti-Semitic symbols and slogans in May 2000.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has worked consistently to promote religious freedom. Embassy officers meet regularly with working-level officials responsible for religious affairs in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education and Religious Affairs. Officers from the Embassy and the Consulate General in Thessaloniki also meet regularly with representatives of various religious groups, including the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic communities. Throughout 1999 and the first half of 2000, the Embassy brought leaders of diverse religious groups to the Embassy and to embassy-related functions to discuss with visiting members of Congress and other U.S. Government officials the situation facing their faiths both in the country and abroad.

Employees of the Embassy's consular section have helped Bible Baptist clergy get permission to visit all prisoners, not only those of the Baptist faith.

The Ambassador and embassy staff accompanied visiting members of Congress to the newly located Jewish museum in Athens, and helped to arrange meetings between representatives of various religious groups and U.S. Government officials in Greece and the United States.

In October 1999, during President Clinton's visit to Greece, religious leaders of all faiths, including Archbishop Demetrios, head of the Orthodox Church in North America, were invited to official embassy events.

The Ambassador has been an open supporter of the Jewish Museum and the Jewish community in general.

The Ambassador and embassy officials regularly visit religious sites throughout the country, invite representatives of all faiths to social events, and meet with individuals of all faiths.

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## HUNGARY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There are 100 churches that have been registered by the courts and the Church Relations Secretariat of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. The Government budget for 1999 included subsidies for 59 of these churches, and the 2000 budget provides subsidies for 76. A total of 300 religious organizations, including monastic orders, regional church centers, and other such groups, are registered with the Government. A church can be established with 100 supporters; there are no other requirements. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, which oversees relations with churches, proposes restrictions for establishing churches with the purpose of excluding violent groups and business enterprises falsely operating as religious organizations to evade tax laws. During 1999 and continuing into 2000, various potential changes to this process were discussed within the Ministry of Cultural Affairs; the most extreme was a proposal that suggested that for a religious congregation to be registered as a church, the group would have to be able to show that it had either 10,000 members or 100 years of history in the country. This proposal was dropped before going to Parliament, and replaced with a new proposal, which was scheduled for debate in Parliament in fall 2000. The new proposal calls for centralizing the registration process by designating one court in Budapest (with a special panel of judges), which would render all decisions on church registration. Using a legal definition, the judges would decide whether the nature of the applicant group was in fact religious or spiritual, rather than political, economic, or social. Scientologists and other churches without a lengthy historical precedence in the country worry that the proposal, although wellintentioned and sound, may leave loopholes for persecution or open a debate in Parliament that may lead to a more restrictive environment.

The State grants financial support to religious denominations for religious practice, educational work, and maintenance of public collections. To promote the support of religious institutions, the Government has signed separate agreements with the country's four largest "historic" denominations: the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist Churches and the Jewish community. Prime Minister Viktor Orban defended the agreements, stating that "under the given circumstances, we succeeded in removing all financial, administrative, political, and legal hurdles from the path of our historic churches."

The Government provides funds each year for revitalizing churches based on annual negotiations between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the Ministry of Finance. In 1999 government support for the four historic denominations, including the money generated from the 1 percent tax donation, totaled \$28.96 million (7.24 billion Huf) for the Roman Catholic Church, \$12.64 million (3.16 billion Huf) for the Calvinist Church, \$504 million (1.35 billion Huf) for the Lutheran Church, and \$3.56 million (890 million Huf) for the Jewish community. Funding for 2000 is still under discussion. In 1999 the Ministry of Cultural Heritage provided \$11.24 million (2.81 billion Huf) for the reconstruction of church properties and monuments and for other investments. This money is part of the overall 1999 total, and was distributed as follows: \$6.84 million (1.71 billion Huf) for the Roman Catholic Church; \$2.44 million (610 million Huf) for the Calvinist Church; \$0.84 million (210 million Huf) for the Lutheran Church; and \$0.48 million (120 million Huf) for the Jewish community.

##### *Religious Demography*

Dissemination of statistics pertaining to religion is banned by the Data Protection Law of 1992. Under its provisions, individuals cannot be asked about their ethnicity or religious affiliation. The Government estimates that the country has 4,500 churches and chapels. There are between 2,200 and 2,500 Catholic, between 1,500 and 1,700 Calvinist, and 200 Lutheran churches, as well as 106 synagogues. Several synagogues have been built since World War II, generally replacing older demolished synagogues. The first completely new synagogue built since the war was constructed during 1998 at a Jewish summer camp in Szarvas. According to estimates from the World Jewish Restitution Organization, there are currently between 70,000 and 110,000 Jews residing in the country. There also are 9 Buddhist and 7 Ortho-

dox denominations, along with an Islamic community of 800 and an additional 400 to 500 Muslims in the country's refugee camps.

The population is not particularly devout. A 1996 law permits citizens to donate 1 percent of their income tax to the church of their choice and an additional 1 percent to the nonprofit agency of their choice. More citizens chose to designate civil organizations than churches, although many do both or neither.

The Government provides the same financial support for church education as for state institutions.

In June 1999, Members of Parliament began investigating ties between the Congregation of Faith and the former ruling party, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), which may have granted economic and political benefits to this religious group. According to press reports, the Faith and Morality Cultural Foundation of Northern Hungary, reportedly tied to the Congregation of Faith, has been accused of fraud and other crimes. However, the Congregation of Faith denies any connection to the Foundation. The congregation, which has been in existence for 20 years, is the fastest growing religious group in the country. Leaders of the congregation also claim that it is the fourth largest religious group in the country, a fact that appears to be substantiated by the number of individuals who designate the congregation as the beneficiary of their 1 percent tax donation. It is a charismatic evangelical church and its fundamentalism, zeal, and appeal to youth have engendered distrust among the country's older, more traditional population.

The traditional practice of going to church and participating in a religious service before taking the oath of office is not compulsory, but it is practiced by some political figures, including Prime Minister Orbán in 1998.

Between 1999 and 2011, the State must decide more than 1,600 pending cases of real property to be restituted to churches. In 1991 Parliament passed the Law on Compensation for Previously Church Owned Properties. This law enables the churches to apply for compensation for real estate that was nationalized without any compensation after January 1, 1946. Real estate cases have involved 12 religious groups: Catholic; Calvinist; Lutheran; Unitarian; Baptist; Hungarian Romanian Orthodox; Hungarian Orthodox; Budai Serb Orthodox; Hungarian Methodist; Seventh-Day Adventist; the Salvation Army, and the Confederation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ).

Overall, 7,220 claims were made by churches for property restitution under the 1991 compensation law: 1,600 cases were rejected as inapplicable under the law; the Government decided to return the property in 1,129 cases, and gave cash payments in another 1,770 cases; approximately 1,000 cases were resolved directly between former and present owners without government intervention; and the remainder (approximately 1,660 cases) must be decided by 2001. Religious orders and schools have regained some property confiscated by the Communist regime.

Between 1997 and 1998, the Government signed agreements on compensation with seven churches: the four historic churches (Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran, and Calvinist) and three smaller ones (Hungarian Unitarian, Hungarian Baptist, and Budai Serb Orthodox). These agreements are subsumed under the 1991 compensation law and reimburse the churches for properties confiscated by the Government after January 1, 1946. The first and most significant agreement, between the Government and the Vatican, gives the Catholic Church \$9.8 million (2.3 billion Huf) in support and calls for the return of church property confiscated by the Communist regime. The agreement with the Jewish community was signed in October 1998 and gives it \$2.6 million (608 million Huf). The Government's payment was made in exchange for the community's agreement to waive its claim on 152 properties. According to MAZSIHISZ, the Jewish community received 4 or 5 buildings as real property restitution and is negotiating with the Government on an additional 10 to 15 properties on the basis of the 1947 Paris Treaty on World War II suffering. The Calvinist and Lutheran Churches, in agreements signed in December 1998, receive \$4.3 million (1 billion Huf) each. The agreements give the Budai Serb Orthodox Church \$190,000 (45 million Huf) and the Hungarian Baptist Church \$85,000 (20 million Huf).

In 1998 the Government paid churches \$19 million (4.4 billion Huf) as compensation for the assets confiscated during the Communist regime. In 1999 the amount is to be raised to \$21 million (5 billion Huf). By 2011 the State is to pay an estimated total of \$179 million (42 billion Huf) to the churches for buildings not returned.

In 1992 Parliament passed a compensation law that provides for restitution to families of persons who were sentenced in court under the Communist and Nazi regimes. The Constitutional Court in 1996 decreed that the law was drawn too narrowly. In 1997 Parliament passed modifications to this law and extended compensation for the period 1939 to 1989 to "victims of political autocracy." This category in-

cludes victims of political, religious, and racist persecution during World War II, forced laborers in Soviet camps, and victims of the 1956 revolution. The 1997 modifications also established the Jewish Heritage Foundation to provide restitution in the form of life pensions to 17,800 Holocaust survivors born before May 9, 1945. An additional 2,040 labor camp survivors are to receive pensions automatically when they reach 60 years of age.

MAZSIHISZ and international Jewish organizations criticized as unfair a 1998 decision by the Government to provide \$128 (30,000 Huf) to the heirs of the Holocaust victims. In 1997 the previous government decided upon \$12 million (3 billion Huf) as the total compensation figure to be distributed among all Holocaust victims. Previous awards to the heirs of victims executed by the Communist regime were \$4,255 (1 million Huf). The Orban Government provided the 30,000 Huf figure as a line item in the Fiscal Year 1999 budget, stating this amount was all that could be paid without budget imbalances. Opposition parties are seeking to hold a special parliamentary session on this and other issues, but the Government is opposed to resolving the issue in this manner. In March 2000, Deputy State Secretary Zsolt Semjen, who is in charge of religious affairs at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, was appointed unofficial mediator for Jewish affairs by the Prime Minister and reported that he is negotiating with the Jewish community on this issue.

In 1998 the Ministry for Cultural Heritage initiated an inventory of museum holdings to identify works of art eligible for restitution or compensation for Holocaust victims.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between religious groups are amicable.

Under Communism the Government maintained ties with the four historic denominations (Roman Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, and Jewish) through the Government Office of Church Affairs. After the fall of Communism, smaller churches also became established, resulting in a more diverse religious community.

In 1997 changes to the Penal Code made it easier to enforce and stiffen penalties for hate crimes committed on the basis of the victim's ethnicity, race, or nationality. A case against Ehrem Kemal, a skinhead group leader, arising from two inflammatory anti-Semitic speeches he made in 1997, ended in October 1999 when Kemal was given a sentence that effectively put him on probation for 2 years.

In May 2000, 34 graves in the Lutheran cemetery of Oroshaza were defaced. Budapest police believe that a youth gang was responsible and that the act was one of vandalism rather than religious intolerance. The case was still open as of mid-2000.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy actively monitors religious activities, particularly relating to issues of compensation and property restitution for Holocaust victims. The Embassy works closely with MAZSIHISZ the Hungarian Jewish Public Foundation and other local and international Jewish organizations as well as the members of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Minority, and Church Affairs to promote fair compensation and access to Holocaust-era archives. Embassy officers have facilitated discussions between U.S. and Hungarian authorities concerning the valuables confiscated from Hungarian Jews by the Nazis (the so-called "gold train.") Embassy officers have met with representatives of the Office of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and the Embassy maintains a dialog on restitution issues that arise from several of the Government's agreements with smaller churches. Embassy officers routinely meet with officials from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Church of Scientology to monitor government support for groups that experience problems outside of the country.

## ICELAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice; however, the State financially supports and promotes an official religion, Lutheranism.

The Parliament passed a law in December 1999 that sets down specific conditions and procedures that a religious organization must follow in order to become officially recognized by the State. Such recognition is necessary in order for a religious organization to be eligible for a per capita share of the mandatory church tax that all citizens 16 years of age and above must pay. Otherwise, there was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both Government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy or promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The official state religion is Lutheranism.

The salaries of the 146 ministers in the state church are paid directly by the State, and these ministers are considered to be public servants under the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs. Except for those who specifically opt out, all citizens 16 years of age and above must pay a church tax of approximately \$7 (ISK \$479.21) per month, which goes to support the operation of the state church. Individuals who choose to opt out of the state church may direct their monthly payment to another religious denomination or organization, provided that denomination or organization has been recognized and registered as such by the State. In cases where the individual has not indicated a religious affiliation, or belongs to an organization that is not recognized officially and registered by the State, the church fee is directed to a secular institution—the University of Iceland.

A new law passed by Parliament in December 1999 (Law No. 108) sets specific conditions and procedures that religious organizations must follow in order to be recognized officially and registered by the State. Such recognition is necessary in order for religious organizations other than the state church to receive a per capita share of church tax funds. The 1999 law is narrower in scope than the 1975 law it replaced and applies only to religious organizations that are seeking to be, or are already, officially recognized and registered. No restrictions or requirements are placed on unregistered religious organizations, which have the same rights as other groups in society. The law is considered necessary to deal with frequent attempts by individuals to obtain recognition of religious organizations simply to receive the tax income benefits. The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs handles applications for recognition and registration of religious organizations. The 1999 law provides for a three-member panel consisting of a theologian, a lawyer, and a social scientist from the University of Iceland to determine the bona fides of the applications. In order to be recognized officially and registered, a religious organization must, among other things, be well established within the country and have a core group of members who regularly practice the religion in compliance with its teachings. All registered religious organizations are required to submit an annual report to the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs describing the organization's operations over the past year. The new law also specifies that the leader of a religious organization must be at least 25 years of age and pay taxes in Iceland. However, the previous requirement that the leader had to be Icelandic was eliminated.

*Religious Demography*

According to the National Statistical Bureau, there were 209,902 Icelanders 16 years of age and over as of December 1, 1999. Of that total, some 165,560, or about 86 percent, were members of the state Lutheran church. Another 8,601 (4 percent) were members of one of three Lutheran Free Churches: Reykjavik Free Church—4,017; Reykjavik Independent Church—1,666; and Hafnafjörður Free Church—2,378. Some 7,277 (3 percent) were members of 19 other recognized and registered religious organizations: Roman Catholic Church—2,813; Seventh-Day Adventists—563; Pentecostal Assembly—1,081; Sjonarhaed Congregation—35; Jehovah's Witnesses—456; Baha'i Faith—307; Ash Faith Society—327; The Cross—357; Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—107; The Way, Free Church—463; The Rock, Christian Community—61; Buddhist Association of Iceland—332; Kefas, Christian Community—44; First Baptist Church—5; Muslim Association—90; The Icelandic Christ-Church—108; The Church of Evangelism—42; The Believers' Fellowship—30; Zen in Iceland/Night Pasture 1—33. In addition, there were 3,978 citizens who belonged to unregistered or unspecified religious organizations and 5,026 who were not part of any religious organization.

A large proportion of citizens who belong to the State Lutheran Church do not practice their faith actively. However, the majority of citizens use traditional Lutheran rituals to mark events such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals. Of Christians who practice their faith actively, the majority are members of other Christian churches or organizations. There are also religions, such as Judaism, which have been practiced in the country for years but have never requested official recognition. (In official statistics these religions are listed as 'other and non-specified'.)

Law no. 108 also confirms that parents control the religious affiliation of their children until the children reach the age of 16. However, parents are required by the law, in accordance with the Children's Act, to "consult" their children about any changes in the children's affiliation after the age of 12. In the absence of specific instructions to the contrary, children at birth are assumed to have the same religious affiliation as their mother and are registered as such.

According to statistics provided by the immigration authorities, the number of foreigners receiving a residence permit has increased significantly during the past several years. In direct relation to the increased number of foreigners (itinerant workers, immigrants, and refugees), the number of religious organizations has increased since such foreigners often practice faiths different than those of citizens born in the country.

The Government is passive rather than proactive in promoting inter-faith understanding. The Government does not sponsor programs or official church-Government councils to coordinate inter-faith dialog.

The Government requires instruction in religion and ethics based on Christianity in public elementary schools, according to the Law on Elementary Schools No. 66 of 1995. Although there had been a debate whether this instruction should be "Christian" or "religious" instruction, the traditionalist view prevailed. Virtually all schools are public schools, with a few exceptions such as the only Roman Catholic parochial school, which is located in Reykjavik where the vast majority of the country's small Roman Catholic community reside. All schools are subject to Law No. 66 with respect to the compulsory curriculum. However, the precise content of this instruction can vary; religious instruction at the Catholic school follows Catholic rather than Lutheran teachings.

Students can be exempted from Christianity classes. According to Law No. 66, the Minister of Education has the formal authority to exempt pupils from instruction in compulsory subjects such as Christianity. In practice, individual school authorities issue exemptions informally. There is no obligation for school authorities to offer other religious or secular instruction in place of Christianity classes.

Educational material on different religions is part of the compulsory syllabus in secondary school. In addition, since religion is a component of culture, pupils learn about religions other than Christianity in history and social science classes as well. The curriculum is not rigid and teachers often are given wide latitude in the classroom. Some place greater emphasis on ethical and philosophical issues rather than on religious instruction per se.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by the report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between religious groups generally are amicable. If members of religious minorities face discrimination, it is more indirect in nature, taking the form of prejudice and lack of inter-faith or intercultural understanding. Iceland is a small, close-knit, homogenous society that closely guards its culture and is not accustomed to accommodating outsiders. Even though most citizens are not active members of the state church, it is still an important part of the country's cultural identity.



During the last decade there has been increased awareness of other religious groups. Informal inter-faith meetings have occurred. Two local human rights organizations were established recently. Diversity Enriches was established on December 10, 1998. Its board members include government officials, journalists and academics; it aims at assisting “new residents” of the country. The Human Rights Association of Immigrants and their Families was founded on June 12, 1999. These organizations are a reflection of the increased attention being given to the status of new immigrants and their religious beliefs.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## IRELAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution forbids promotion of one religion over another and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, and the Government does not hamper the teaching or practice of any faith. There is no state religion, and there is no discrimination against nontraditional religious groups. There is no requirement in Irish law that religious groups or organizations register with the Government, nor is there any formal mechanism for Government recognition of a religion or religious group.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. According to official government statistics collected during the 1991 census (the most recent figures available), the religious affiliation of the population is 91.6 percent Roman Catholic, 2.5 percent Church of Ireland (Anglican), 0.4 percent Presbyterian, 0.1 percent Methodist, and less than 0.1 percent Jewish. Approximately 3 percent of the population are members of another religion or have no specific religious belief. While no statistics are yet available, Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities are growing, especially in Dublin, as a result of immigration.

Although almost 92 percent of the population are classified as Roman Catholic, this is a “nominal” figure. Only 60 percent of Irish Catholics are estimated to be active church members. There are also numerous and varied small religious groups.

Immigrants and non-citizens encounter few difficulties in practicing their faiths. In the case of non-Catholics, there are some difficulties associated with the availability of facilities and personnel outside of Dublin.

Adherence to Roman Catholicism can be politically advantageous because of the country’s history and tradition as a predominantly Catholic country and society. Members of the major political parties (Fianna Fail and Fine Gael) tend to be practicing Catholics.

The Government does not require but does permit religious instruction in public schools. Most primary and secondary schools are denominational, and their boards of management are controlled partially by the Catholic Church.

Under the terms of the Constitution, the Department of Education must and does provide equal funding to schools of different religious denominations (such as an Islamic school in Dublin). Although religious instruction is an integral part of the curriculum, parents may exempt their children from such instruction.

In October 1999, the Employment Equality Act was implemented, which outlaws discrimination in relation to employment on the basis of nine discriminatory grounds, including religion. The Act established an Equality Authority (replacing

the old Employment Equality Agency) to assure continued work toward the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality in employment. In April 2000, the President signed into law the Equal Status 2000 Act, which prohibits discrimination outside of the employment context (such as in education or provision of goods) based on the same grounds used in the Employment Equality Act. The Equal Status 2000 Act is to be implemented before the end of 2000.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between various religious communities are amicable and friction is rare. Various religions, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), and academic institutions have established activities or projects designed to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different religions.

Irish society is largely homogenous; as a result, religious differences are not tied to ethnic or political differences. However, some citizens have political attitudes toward the conflict in Northern Ireland that are driven by their religious identities and loyalties. For example, some Catholics support Nationalist and Republican parties or ideals in the north on the basis of their religious loyalty.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with all communities, including religious groups and NGO's that deal with issues of religious freedom on a regular basis. The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## ITALY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. Issues relating to religion that arise stem from formal state recognition (to facilitate access by ministers of religion to public hospitals and prisons, or to link religious ceremonies to civil registration of marriages), state financial support for religion, and state involvement with the teaching of religion in the public schools. The Catholic Church's historic and continuing predominant role in society leads to controversy when church teaching is perceived as instruction to Catholic legislators on matters of public policy.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The 1947 Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Prior to the Constitution's adoption, Italy's relations with the Catholic Church were governed by a 1929 Concordat, which established Catholicism as the country's state religion. A 1984 revision of the Concordat formalized the principle of a secular state but maintained the principle of state support for religion—support that also could be extended, if requested, to non-Catholic confessions. A special law ("intesa") enacted in 1984 granted specific benefits to the Waldensian Church. Similar laws (which involve lengthy procedures to obtain) extended similar benefits to the Adventists and Assembly of God (1988), to Jews (1989), and to Baptists and Lutherans (1995). In March 2000, the Government agreed to legislation that would establish

two new intesas—with the Buddhist Union and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) filed a request for an intesa in 1998; an organization formed in 2000 that represents a coalition of Muslim organizations announced in April that it would seek an intesa. An intesa grants ministers of religion automatic access to state hospitals, prisons, and military barracks, allows for civil registry of religious marriages, facilitates special religious practices regarding funerals, and exempts students from school attendance on religious holidays. If the religious community so requests, an intesa can provide for a state subsidy through tax revenue collection—a privilege that some religious communities initially declined but later requested.

#### *Religious Demography*

An estimated 85 percent of native-born citizens are nominally Roman Catholic. Jehovah's Witnesses form the second largest denomination among such citizens, numbering some 400,000. However, immigration—both legal and clandestine—continues to add large groups of non-Christian residents, mainly Muslims from North Africa, South Asia, Albania, and the Middle East, who now number an estimated 1 million. Buddhists include some 40,000 Europeans and 20,000 Asians. There are approximately 80,000 Scientologists. There are approximately 30,000 Waldensians, and 20,000 Mormons, largely concentrated in Rome and northern cities. A declining Jewish community of about 30,000 maintains synagogues in 21 cities.

Missionaries or religious workers do not encounter problems but must apply for appropriate visas prior to arriving in Italy.

The revised Concordat of 1984 accorded the Catholic Church certain privileges. For example, the Church may select Catholic religion teachers in the public schools, whose salaries are paid by the State. The "hour of religion" class that public schools teach is optional, and students not interested in this course are free to study other subjects or, in certain cases, to leave school early. Whereas Catholic priests once taught catechism, church-selected religion teachers may be either lay or religious, and their instruction may include material relevant to non-Catholic faiths. However, problems may arise in small communities where information about other faiths and numbers of non-Catholic communicants are limited.

While Roman Catholicism is no longer the state religion, its role as the dominant one occasionally gives rise to problems—some overt, others subtly societal. Declining enrollment in Catholic schools led church officials to seek government aid, despite the 1947 Constitution's prohibition against State support for private schools. A 1999 legislative formula that provided means-tested support for students from poorer families (enrolled either at private or state schools) nonetheless drew papal criticism for being "inadequate." The Church criticized municipal and national authorities who granted permission for a gay "pride week" to be held in Rome (in Jubilee Year 2000) and demanded that the event, which the Church considers offensive to its teaching on homosexuality, be postponed. Following a March 2000 European Parliament vote in favor of granting homosexual couples the same legal rights as married ones, the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Family called on Italian legislators "and particularly Catholic members of Parliament" to oppose such legislation. The continuing presence of Catholic symbols, such as crucifixes, which may be found hanging on courtroom or government office walls, has drawn criticism and has been the object of lawsuits. In April 2000, the Court of Cassation ruled in favor of a school teacher who asserted that crucifixes should not be present at voting sites maintained by a secular state.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II: SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The overall tone for interconfessional relations is set by religious and government officials who, by word and practice, encourage mutual respect for differences. In view of the negative aspects of the nation's Fascist past, government leaders acknowledge and pay tribute to Jews victimized by the country's 1938 racial laws.

## SECTION III: U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

**KAZAKHSTAN**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the various denominations worship largely without government interference; however, government officials sometimes harass Islamic and Christian groups whose members are regarded as religious extremists.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The country is multiethnic, with a long tradition of tolerance and secularism. Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. There were reports that law enforcement, prosecutorial, and intelligence officials in some jurisdictions routinely review the activities of religious organizations. Government scrutiny of religious groups is often tied to the requirement that groups register with the government in order to conduct legal transactions such as renting property or hiring employees. Increasing activities of extremist, self-described religious groups in the Central Asian region led to calls for greater control of religious groups in the country. In July 1999, government forces raided a religious meeting near Taraz detained 70 persons and reportedly beat several of them.

Ultimately, one of the meeting's organizers was convicted of promoting the activities of an unregistered organization and jailed. He was released in a general amnesty a few weeks later.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its dialog about regional security threats and as part of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the various denominations worship largely without government interference; however, government officials sometimes harass Islamic and Christian groups whose members are regarded as religious extremists. The Constitution defines the country as a secular state. It also requires foreign religious associations to carry out their activities, including the appointment of the heads of religious associations "in coordination with appropriate state institutions." There were credible allegations that the Government played a significant role in the appointment in June 2000 of the new Mufti, the head of the National Muslim Organization. He denied these allegations. In general, the Government does not interfere with the appointment of religious leaders or the activities of foreign religious associations.

Religious organizations, including churches, must register with the Ministry of Justice in order to receive legal status. Without registration religious organizations cannot buy or rent real property, hire employees, obtain visas for foreign missionaries, or engage in any other legal transactions. Although religious organizations, unlike other nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), are entitled by law to carry out their work without government registration, in practice many local officials insist that they register. Registration requires an application submitted by at least 10 persons and is usually a quick and simple process. Some religious groups out of favor with the authorities in some jurisdictions encounter difficulties registering in those jurisdictions. There were no reports that the Government prohibited the activities of any religious group whose registration application it turned down.

Religious organizations receive no tax privileges other than exemptions from taxes on church collections and income from certain religious activities. The Government has donated buildings and provided other assistance for the construction of new mosques and Eastern Orthodox churches.

*Religious Demography*

Society is ethnically diverse, and many religions are represented. However, due to the country's nomadic and Soviet past many residents reject religious labels or describe themselves as nonbelievers (see Section II). Ethnic Kazakhs, who constitute approximately one half of the national population, historically are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School. In a 1998 government survey, 80 percent of ethnic Kazakhs described themselves as Muslims, although government and independent experts be-

lieve that a large number of these are nonobservant. Other traditionally Sunni Muslim groups, which constitute approximately 5 to 10 percent of the population, include Tatars, Uyghurs, Uzbeks, Turks, and Chechens. Slavs, principally Russians and Ukrainians, are by tradition Eastern Orthodox and constitute about one-third of the population. The 1998 government survey found that 60 percent of ethnic Slavs identify themselves as Orthodox. An independent expert estimates that two-thirds of Slavic citizens would say that they belong to no religion or are indifferent to religion. Ethnic Germans, largely Lutheran and Catholic, constituted approximately 5 percent of the population when the country became independent in 1991, but the majority of these are thought to have emigrated to Germany. A small Jewish community is estimated at well below 1 percent of the population. Two new synagogues, in Astana and Pavlodar, opened. President Nazarbayev personally presented historical records on Rabbi Shnerson's father, who was exiled to the country during the Soviet period, to the Lubavitcher community in a December 1999 visit to New York.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government officials frequently express concerns about the potential spread of religious extremism. They point especially to the risk of political Islam spreading north from Afghanistan and other states. Their longstanding concerns intensified following a series of bombings in the capital of neighboring Uzbekistan in February 1999, and incursions by armed militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan from Tajikistan into neighboring Kyrgyzstan during the summer and fall of 1999. In September 1999, the National Security Council, which is chaired by the President, created a commission to develop policies to combat religious extremism.

Religious groups out of favor with the authorities encounter difficulties registering. These groups include Jehovah's Witnesses, many Protestant groups, Muslim groups independent of the national Muslim organization headed by the Mufti of Kazakhstan, and Orthodox Christian groups independent of the Orthodox Archbishop.

Despite leaders' concerns about regional security threats from groups claiming a religious basis, the Government refrained from imposing new legal restrictions on religious freedom. Draft restrictive amendments to the Law on Religion, withdrawn by the Government in March 1999, were not reintroduced. However, the country's highest law enforcement officials called for toughening the Religion Law. The Procurator General of the Republic and the Interior Minister both called for prohibiting the activities of unregistered religious organizations. In February 2000, the Interior Minister publicly expressed his dissatisfaction with the presence of conservative Muslims in the country and criticized a local official for attending a stadium meeting of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Committee for National Security (KNB, the successor to the Soviet-era KGB) on several occasions has characterized the fight against "religious extremism" as a top priority of the internal intelligence service. The official Russian-language newspaper, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, and the official television station, *Khabar*, presented as news reports allegations that unregistered religious groups present a threat to national security and social cohesion.

On June 26, 2000, the Third Congress of Muslims in Kazakhstan voted to appoint Absattar Derbisaliyev as the new Mufti (spiritual chief) of the National Muslim Organization. Senior government officials, including reportedly the Chief of the Presidential Administration and the Minister of Culture, Information, and Public Accord, took part in the Congress. Some Muslims alleged that the government officials engineered Derbisaliyev's appointment and the resignation of his predecessor. Derbisaliyev publicly denied that government officials present at the Congress influenced the votes of congress participants, indicating that they were not there when the voting was conducted.

Some local officials continued to assert, contrary to law, that unregistered religious organizations could not conduct religious activities. In March 2000, the city prosecutor's office in Astana, the national capital, issued a written warning to a group of Schismatic Baptists for not being registered. Earlier in the month, the head of the Ministry of Culture, Information and Public Accord visited the leader of the Schismatic Baptists to recommend that they alter their charter prohibition against seeking government registration and apply for registration. Law enforcement authorities in Akmola oblast, the province that includes Astana, conduct regular inspections of religious organizations in order, they assert, to prevent the development of religious extremism and to ensure that religious groups are paying taxes.

Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses alleged incidents of harassment by a number of local governments. They claimed that city officials in Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent sometimes blocked the group from renting stadiums or other large public or private sites for religious meetings. In other cities, officials allowed the church to rent facilities for such gatherings. Church representatives alleged that the direc-

tor of one facility in Almaty told them that city officials had given instructions not to rent space to Jehovah's Witnesses. A city official denied the allegation. Church representatives also alleged that the prosecutor's office in Kostenai requested information from the church about its clergymen, organizational structure, and schools, and in April 2000 inspected documents of Jehovah's Witnesses congregations in Taraz and Abay. The church faced difficulties registering communities of church members in Petropavlovsk, where registration has been denied several times, and Aktau, though it ultimately was registered in Aktau.

Foreign missionary activity is authorized under law, but only when missionaries are accredited by the State. In practice many missionaries operate without accreditation. Although legally entitled to register religious organizations, foreign missionaries generally find that they must list a majority of local citizens among the 10 founders of the religious organization.

A 1999 law on education forbids the activities of educational institutions, including religious schools, which have not been registered by the Ministry of Education. Although no religious schools are known to be registered, the Government apparently took no action against religious schools over registration pending full implementation of the law.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

On July 14, 1999, a group of more than 100 armed special forces and police raided a camp outside Taraz where a Muslim group was holding a private religious study retreat. The authorities detained 70 group members, including, reportedly, a 6-year-old and 11 other minors. Group members alleged that the authorities beat all 70 detainees in jail. One minor reportedly suffered a broken nose; another detainee reportedly suffered broken ribs. Although the Interior Minister publicly alleged that the group was terrorist, not religious, in nature, the authorities later publicly announced that they uncovered no weapons or politically subversive literature at the camp. All 70 detainees were freed by September 1999. Only one group leader was charged with a crime (promoting the activities of an unregistered organization), but he was released under a general amnesty law passed in August 1999.

In September 1999, police closed an Islamic school in Karasu village, near Almaty. The authorities alleged that a Pakistani teacher at the school was promoting religious extremism and that students were being kept forcibly at the school. The school was allowed to reopen, but it closed again in October 1999.

In June 2000, immigration officials at Almaty airport refused to admit an American missionary into the country. The missionary, who held a valid visa, alleged that airport authorities did not give an explanation for his exclusion, saying only that the reasons were secret. The missionary suggested that his exclusion might have been related to problems that he had 6 months earlier with customs officials in Russia, where he had performed religious work. He subsequently was denied a visa to return to Russia. Government officials subsequently confirmed the refusal to grant entry to the missionary and indicated that his name matched one on an immigration lookout list that had been circulated to members of the Confederation of Independent States.

Other foreign missionaries, unwelcome to some Muslim and Orthodox citizens, have complained of occasional harassment by low-level government officials. In particular evangelical Protestants working in schools, hospitals, and other social service institutions have alleged government hostility toward their efforts to proselytize.

On June 7, 2000, local KNB and interior ministry officers, accompanied by local government officials, raided a prayer house belonging to a registered community of Jehovah's Witnesses in the village of Derbesek (South Kazakhstan oblast). The officers confiscated religious literature and church correspondence. Church representatives complained to district and oblast KNB officials that the raid was illegal because the officers did not have a prosecutor's warrant. In response, the director of the KNB department for South Kazakhstan oblast wrote a letter confirming that no evidence of "illegal missionary activity" was discovered and that the local KNB officers who participated in the raid had been ordered to return the seized literature and correspondence.

The Government often invites the national leaders of the two largest religions, Islam and Russian Orthodoxy, to participate jointly in state events. Leaders of other religions were invited to appearances by the Islamic Mufti and the Orthodox Archbishop, often in the presence of the President, which are intended to promote religious and ethnic harmony. Many government officials attended the founding session of the All Kazakhstan Jewish Congress in December 1999. Some members of other faiths, including Muslims not affiliated with the national Muslim organization headed by the Mufti, criticize the Government's inclusion of the Mufti and Archbishop in state events as official favoritism and a violation of the constitutional separation

of church and state. Many also believe that the distinction government officials sometimes make between “traditional” and “nontraditional” religions violates the fundamental standard of equality among religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Other than the 70 persons detained near Taraz, in July 1999, there were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country is multiethnic, with a long tradition of tolerance and secularism. Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. Since independence the number of mosques has increased greatly.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

In a series of private meetings with senior officials about threats to regional security in Central Asia, the U.S. Ambassador and visiting officials from Washington urged the Government not to increase state control of religion because regional extremist groups call themselves religious. The Ambassador addressed the inaugural meeting of the Jewish Congress of Kazakhstan in December 1999. To publicize the release of the first annual report on International Religious Freedom in September 1999, the Ambassador hosted a gathering for a wide range of religious figures, human rights activists, government officials, and foreign diplomats. The Embassy human rights officer met often with representatives of a wide array of religious groups, including groups that alleged harassment by government authorities. The officer also met with human rights activists about religious freedom and attended a December 1999 conference on religious freedom in Kazakhstan organized by the Almaty Helsinki Commission, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Commission.

After immigration officials refused to allow an American missionary to enter the country in June 2000, the Embassy formally requested an explanation from the Government.

## KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government occasionally infringes on this right. The Constitution provides for a secular state and the separation of church and state, and the Government does not support any one religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations among the faiths generally are amicable. The Government considers radical Islam to be a threat to the country's stability.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its dialog about threats to regional security and as part of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government occasionally infringes on this right. The Constitution provides for a secular state and the separation of church and state, and the Government does not support any one religion.

In 1996 the Government created the State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA), officially to promote religious tolerance, protect freedom of conscience, and oversee laws on religion. The Commission quickly became active and oversaw the registration of over 300 religious institutions of which 210 are Christian denominations. According to a 1997 presidential decree, all religious organizations must be registered by the SCRA, which must recognize the registrant as a religious organization; each congregation must register separately. Subsequently, a religious organi-

zation must register with the Ministry of Justice to obtain status as a legal entity—necessary to own property, open bank accounts, and otherwise engage in contractual activities. However, if a religious organization engages in commercial activity, it is required to pay taxes in accordance with the tax code. In practice the Ministry has never registered a religious organization without prior registration by the SCRA. The Ministry's registration process sometimes is cumbersome, taking a month on average, but no religious organization has been denied registration after properly completing all formalities. No application for registration of a religious organization was being delayed as of mid-2000. The Reunification Church, which is registered as a social, rather than a religious organization, has "semi-official" status.

#### *Religious Demography*

Islam is the single most widely practiced faith. Official sources estimate that up to 80 percent of the inhabitants are Muslims. There are approximately 120 mosques, each with its own madrassa for initial religious training. There also are two institutes for higher Islamic teaching. Approximately 17 percent of the population are Russian Orthodox. There are 40 Russian Orthodox churches and well over 200 churches and houses of prayer for other Christian denominations. For example, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church operates six churches in Bishkek, as well as several elsewhere in the country. Jews, Buddhists, and Catholics account for approximately 3 percent of the population, and their adherents practice their religions openly in churches, temples, and synagogues. A Roman Catholic Church in Bishkek functions unhindered. A small Jewish congregation meets in Bishkek. The group organizes informal cultural studies and humanitarian services, chiefly food assistance for its elderly. There also are examples of syncretistic religious practices. Most notably, there is a Baptist church in the Naryn region whose followers are predominantly ethnic Kyrgyz. While they worship as Christians, they have adapted Muslim modes of prayer into their Christian rituals. There is no official estimate of the number of atheists in the population.

Islam is practiced widely throughout the country, in both the urban and rural areas. Russian Orthodoxy typically is concentrated in the cities where a larger ethnic Russian population exists. The other faiths also are practiced more commonly in the cities where their smaller communities tend to be concentrated. There is a correlation between ethnicity and religion, with ethnic Kyrgyz tending more toward Islam and ethnic Russians favoring either the Russian Orthodox Church or one of the other Western denominations. Exact statistics are not available, but while the majority of the population claims to follow Islam, a significant number of these adherents appear to be only nominal believers and identify with the faith out of historical or ethnic allegiance. A significant number of the followers of the Russian Orthodox Church also appear to be only nominal believers.

A number of missionary groups operate in the country, including groups from the United States, Germany, and Korea, as well as missionaries from Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. They represent a variety of religious organizations including Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unified Church of Christ of Evangelists, and Korean Presbyterians. These organizations operate freely, although they are required to register with the Government.

The Government recognizes three Muslim holidays (Noorus, Kurban Ait, and Orozo Ait) and one Russian Orthodox holiday (Christmas, which is observed on January 7 in accordance with the Russian Orthodox calendar) as national holidays. The President and the Government send greetings to the followers of these faiths on their major religious holidays, and these messages are printed in the mass media.

To encourage religious tolerance, the Government works through the SCRA to promote inter-faith dialog. The SCRA hosts meetings of religious groups to bring the faiths together in open forums. The SCRA assists various faiths to work together on programs for the protection of the poor and the elderly.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government authorities indicated that they would monitor the activities of the Unification Church, which is led by Reverend Moon. The Unification Church currently is not active in the country, but it has a presence through the charity organization of Reverend Moon's wife. There were no reports of interference in its activities during the period covered by this report.

Religious leaders note with concern that the SCRA frequently uses the term "national security" in its statements. For example, the Commission has expressed some concern about the destabilizing presence of the Unification Church. The Ministry of Internal Affairs often plays a leading role on various religious questions.

The Government expressly forbids the teaching of religion (or atheism) in public schools.



*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Muslim leaders complain that the SCRA makes decisions about religious events without consulting them. However, the Government is concerned about the threat of political extremism in the guise of conservative Islam. The Government considers radical Islam, whose followers it labels “Wahhabis,” a threat to the country’s stability. The Government fears that Wahhabis seek to overthrow the secular government and establish an Islamic theocracy. During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to express public concern about extremists with either radical religious or political agendas. The sentencing in May 2000 of three Uighur Islamic militants who were charged with the 1998 bombings in Osh added to the Government’s concern about the “Wahhabist” elements operating in the country. An armed incursion of Islamic extremists into southern Kyrgyzstan in August-October 1999 also increased the Government’s apprehension about radical Islam and the actions of its followers. According to an Amnesty International report of June 21, 2000, Jelil Turdai, an ethnic Uighur Chinese national was arrested in Bishkek for not having the necessary residence permit. After a police search of his apartment turned up religious material that was deemed fundamentalist, he was taken into custody for possessing “Wahhabist” materials, and after being interrogated by Chinese and Kyrgyz security agents he was deported back to China where his fate is unknown.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the faiths generally are amicable. Members of the two major religions, Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church, respect each other’s major holidays and exchange holiday greetings.

There is no evidence of widespread societal discrimination or violence against members of different religious groups. However, there is anecdotal evidence of periodic tension between followers of conservative Islam and foreign missionaries in rural areas. There were no reports of these tensions escalating to serious levels; the parties involved appear to have resolved their problems peacefully over time.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Six representatives from Kyrgyzstan participated in the U.S. Government sponsored program, “Religious Freedom and Tolerance in the United States: Focus on Islam,” in March-April 2000. The representatives learned about how Islam is perceived and practiced in the U.S.

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**LATVIA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, bureaucratic problems for minority religions persist.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, bureaucratic problems for minority religions persist. There is no state religion; however, the Government distinguishes between “traditional” (Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believers, Baptists, and Jewish) and “new” religions.

Although the Government does not require the registration of religious groups, the 1995 Law on Religious Organizations accords religious organizations certain rights and privileges when they register, such as status as a separate legal entity for owning property or other financial transactions, as well as tax benefits for donors. Registration also eases the rules for public gatherings.

According to the Law on Religious Organizations, any 10 citizens or permanent residents over the age of 18 may apply to register a church. Asylum seekers, foreign embassy staff, and those in the country temporarily in a special status cannot register a religious organization. Congregations functioning in the country for the first time that do not belong to a church association already registered must reregister each year for 10 years. Ten or more congregations of the same denomination and with permanent registration status may form a religious association. Only churches with religious association status may establish theological schools or monasteries. A decision to register a church is made by the Minister of Justice.

According to Ministry of Justice officials, most registration applications are approved eventually once proper documents are submitted. Problems arise and registration is denied because the Law on Religious Organizations does not permit simultaneous registration of more than one religious union (church) in a single confession. Because of this provision, the Government can not register any splinter groups, including an independent Jewish congregation, the Latvian Free Orthodox Church, and a separate Old Believers group. The Christian Scientists have been refused registration due to opposition from the Doctors Association.

Shortly after the renewal of independence in 1991, the Vatican, with the support of the Latvian Catholic community, requested negotiations for a reestablishment of the 1922 Concordat, which had existed between Latvia and the Vatican during Latvia's period of independence between World War I and World War II. In 1996, the Prime Minister established a working group to negotiate a new agreement. This agreement reportedly would grant the Roman Catholic Church privileged status. The negotiations have led to some concern among members of other religions. If approved, it is expected that adherents of other faiths would seek similar recognition and benefits for their own religious community.

#### *Religious Demography*

The three largest faiths are Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Orthodoxy. No precise denomination membership statistics are available. Sizeable religious minorities include Baptists, Pentecostals, and various evangelical Protestant groups. The once large Jewish community was virtually destroyed in the Holocaust during the 1941–44 German occupation of Latvia and now totals only 6,000 persons.

As of February 2000, the Justice Ministry had registered over 1,000 congregations. This total includes: Lutheran (302), Roman Catholic (243), Orthodox (112), Baptist (85), Old Believer Orthodox (65), Seventh-Day Adventist (44), Jehovah's Witnesses (11), Methodists (10), Jewish (7), Buddhist (3), Muslim (6), Hare Krishnas (8), Mormons (1), and over 100 others.

Interest in religion has increased markedly since independence. However, a large percentage of these adherents do not practice their faith regularly. Churches have provided the following estimates of church membership to the Justice Ministry: Lutheran (400,000), Roman Catholic (500,000), Orthodox (190,000), Baptist (6,000), Old Believer Orthodox (70,000), Seventh-Day Adventist (4,000), Jehovah's Witnesses (2,000), Methodists (500), Jewish (6,000), Buddhist (100), Muslim (300), Hare Krishnas (500), and Mormons (200). There are significant numbers of atheists, perhaps a majority of the population. The Orthodox, many of them Russian-speaking, noncitizen permanent residents, are concentrated in the major cities, while many Catholics live in the east.

There is a New Religions Consultative Council whose membership consists of doctors, academics, and the independent human rights ombudsman. The council, which meets on an "ad hoc" basis, can research and write opinions on specific issues, but has no decision-making authority. There also is a Traditional Religion Council, which meets monthly. This body reportedly aims at facilitating greater ecumenical communication, discussing matters of common concern and improving dialog between the traditional faiths and the State.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Latvian visa regulations effective since July 1999 require religious workers to present either an ordination certificate or evidence of religious education that corresponds to a Latvian bachelor's degree in theology. The visa application process still is cumbersome. Nonetheless, the Government cooperated to resolve several difficult visa cases in favor of missionary workers. Difficulties in this area diminished

and Citizenship and Migration Department officials have worked to ease the situation.

Foreign evangelists and missionaries, including from the United States, are permitted to hold meetings and to proselytize, but the law stipulates that only domestic religious organizations may invite them to conduct such activities. Foreign religious denominations have criticized this provision.

The Law on Religious Organizations stipulates that religion may be taught to students in public schools on a voluntary basis only by representatives of Evangelical Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believer, Baptist, and Jewish religions. The State provides funds for this education. Students at state-supported national minority schools also may receive education on the religion "characteristic of the national minority" on a voluntary basis. Other denominations may provide religious education in private schools only.

The Latvian Lutheran Church established its own clergy education center, the Luther Academy in Riga, in 1998. The Roman Catholic Church also has its own seminary but wants to establish its own separate faculty of theology at the University of Latvia or, alternatively, join forces with a Catholic university elsewhere in Europe that would issue degrees. The University of Latvia's theological faculty is now nondenominational.

Citizen's passports currently indicate the ethnicity of the bearer. Jews are considered an ethnic group and are listed as such rather than Latvian, Russian, etc. This practice may be phased out shortly.

Jewish community leaders have regained a number of major properties around the country, and they report that the legal framework for restitution of religious property is adequate. While restitution of a few Jewish properties proceeds, the process is slow, complex, and often delayed by legal wrangling and bureaucratic obstacles.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. Ecumenism still is a new concept in the country and traditional religions have adopted a distinctly reserved attitude towards the concept. Although government officials are encouraging a broader understanding of and acceptance of newer religions, lingering suspicions remain towards newer nontraditional faiths.

There was no progress reported in apprehending the perpetrators of the 1995 bombing of the central synagogue in Riga, or the second bombing in 1998 of the same synagogue. In June 1998, two youths were arrested for painting anti-Semitic slogans on a wall opposite the synagogue. The Riga center district police opened an investigation for hooliganism. The case was sent forward to the Prosecutor's office for indictment but was returned for additional investigation. The youths were released shortly after being apprehended.

There were scattered incidents in Liepaja and other places during 1998 in which Jewish monuments were defaced. In April 1999, a bomb exploded at a Jewish Holocaust memorial just outside the city. Police have not yet identified the culprits responsible for these incidents.

The Latvian Historical Commission, under the auspices of former President Guntis Ulmanis and current President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, held two international meetings, in July 1999 and in March 2000, attended by scholars from a broad range of countries, including the United States and Israel. Under the direction of its executive director, the Historical Commission also sponsored international conferences on topics such as "Jews in a Changing World" in October 1999, held consultations in the United States with Jewish-American organizations, and launched major Holocaust education projects, including a workshop with the teachers of the Latvian history association, and sponsored Latvian teachers' travels to the Yad Vashem (a Holocaust memorial) in Israel for education courses. Two well-known books on the Holocaust, William Styron's "Sophie's Choice" and Simon Wiesenthal's "Sunflower" were published in Latvian. President Vike-Freiberga in April 2000 dedicated a plaque to the family of Zanis Lipke, a blue-collar worker who saved the lives of more than 50 Jews during the Holocaust. She has supported firmly government efforts to bring

war criminals, including those who participated in Nazi war crimes, to justice. In addition the University of Latvia Judaic Studies center was renovated and expanded. In July 2000, President Vike Freiberga presented the country's highest "Three Star" award to four citizens whose actions during World War II are credited with saving the lives of more than 400 Latvian Jews.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy worked to support the principle of religious freedom by engaging actively in the Jewish property restitution process. The Embassy maintains regular contact with the Jewish community on this matter. The Embassy also takes an active role in supporting the work of the Historical Commission and assisted with funding of the translation of "Sophie's Choice".

Embassy officials meet regularly with visiting missionary groups from the U.S. Embassy officials discussed problems that members of certain minority religions experienced at the Citizenship and Migration Department when seeking visas and residency permits.

Two representatives from the Ministry of Justice participated in a summer 1999 U.S. Government-funded international visitor travel/study program in the United States focused on freedom of religion and religious tolerance issues.

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## LIECHTENSTEIN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The finances of the Roman Catholic Church are integrated directly into the budgets of the national and local governments; approximately \$196,000 (CHF 300,000) was budgeted for 1999, plus additional sums from the 11 communes. Normally, church funding comes from the general budget, as decided by Parliament, and is not a direct "tithe" paid by the citizen. However, the relationship between the State and the Roman Catholic Church currently is being redefined. As an interim solution, the State's financial contributions for 1999, 2000, and 2001 are paid into a special account. When a new agreement is reached (no later than 2002), the agreed amount will be released to the Catholic Church. The Government gives money not only to the Catholic Church but also to other denominations. The budget is allocated proportionately according to membership numbers. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

#### *Religious Demography*

Of a total population of 32,015 (as of December 31, 1998, according to the Office of the National Economy) there are 24,993 Roman Catholics; 2,276 Protestants; 1,139 Muslims; 225 Eastern Orthodox; 2 Buddhists; 3 Jehovah's Witnesses; 17 Anglicans; 15 Jews; 12 Baha'is; 11 New Apostolics; 7 members of other religions; and 3,029 persons undecided.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups. In order to receive a religious worker visa, an applicant must demonstrate that the host organization is important for the entire country. An applicant must have completed theological studies and be accredited to an acknowledged order. Visa requests normally are not denied and are processed in the same manner as requests from other individuals or workers.

Roman Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all schools, but the authorities routinely grant exemptions for children whose parents so request. Both religions typically are taught separately but simultaneously in primary and secondary schools, normally 2 hours per week.

The Government collaborates with religious institutions by supporting inter-faith dialogs and providing adult education courses in religion as well as other subjects. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the religious communities. Catholics, Protestants, and members of other faiths work well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## LITHUANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities, although members of religious minorities occasionally are subject to acts of intolerance. A certain level of anti-Semitic sentiment persists in the country. Nontraditional religious groups face some restrictions. In mid-1999 some U.S. missionary groups had problems with new government procedures for temporary residence permits.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy intervened to assist in the resolution of the residency permit problems of U.S. missionaries.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Law on Religious Communities and Associations was passed in 1995. It grants religious communities, associations, and centers property rights to prayer houses, homes, and other buildings and permits construction necessary for their activities. Article 5 of this law mentions nine religious communities that have been declared "traditional" by the law and therefore are eligible for governmental assistance: Latin Rite Catholics; Greek Rite Catholics; Evangelical Lutherans; Evangelical Reformers; Orthodox; Old Believers; Jews; Sunni Muslims; and Karaites. These traditional associations and communities receive annual financial support from the State. Other religious communities are not eligible for financial assistance from the Government, but there are no restrictions on their activities or property rights.

In May 1999, the Seimas (Parliament) amended the Law on Religious Communities and Associations. The amendment provides funding from the national budget for educational institutions of traditional religious organizations. The Government Department of European Law has warned publicly that this amendment discriminates in favor of traditional religious communities versus nontraditional; the law is expected to come in to effect in 2001.

Relations between the Government and the officially registered Jewish community are good. In May 1999, the Minister of Justice recognized the Hasidic Chabad Lubavich community as a traditional religious organization. The Ministry of Justice previously had argued that the Chabad Lubavich was not a part of the country's historical, spiritual, or social heritage and therefore could not be registered as tradi-

tional. The lack of recognition did not have a direct impact on Chabad Lubavich activities but was a sore point in relations with the Government and with other religious groups.

Traditional religious associations and communities are not required to register their bylaws with the Ministry in order to receive legal status. However, nontraditional religious communities have to present an application, a founding statement signed by no less than 15 members, and a description of religious teaching and its aims. The Ministry has to review the documents within 6 months.

Since these laws were enacted, the Ministry of Justice turned down two applications, those of the Osho Ojas Meditation Center and the Lithuanian Pagans Community.

Based on the Law on Procedures for the Restoration of the Rights of Religious Communities to Existing Real Property, all religious communities had enjoyed equal opportunity in regaining control over former property used for conducting religious services. However, although the law provides for the restitution of private property to citizens, the deadline for filing claims has passed. A number of successful claims have been made, and others still are pending. Lack of funds for compensation and protracted bureaucratic obstacles are the primary problems preventing the return of private property. The Government has taken no action on the problem of (community) property without heirs and has no plans to do so.

#### *Religious Demography*

The Catholic Church is predominant. In general, the Orthodox are concentrated in the east along the border with Belarus. Lutherans are more concentrated to the southwest, towards Russia's Kaliningrad region and Lithuania's Baltic Sea coast. Other faiths are distributed more evenly throughout the country.

The Chabad Lubavich operates a school (kindergarten through 12th grade), a social center, and a kosher kitchen in the capital of Vilnius.

Karaite, while not unique to Lithuania, exist in few other locations in the world. They are considered by some to be a branch of Judaism; their religion is based exclusively on the Old Testament. Two houses of worship (known singularly as "kenesa"), in Vilnius and Trakai, serve the Karaite religious community of approximately 250 members. The Karaites have been in the country since 1397. Considered as well to constitute a distinct ethnic group—Karaites speak a Turkic-based language and use the Hebrew alphabet—their community president is also their only religious leader.

In total there were 921 traditional and 165 nontraditional religious associations and communities registered in the country according to the Ministry of Justice.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Foreign missionary groups, including Baptists, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses, operate in the country, and their activities are not restricted. However, several U.S. religious missionary groups complained in mid-1999 to the U.S. Embassy over a change in temporary residency requirements. These groups were having problems with the Government's new procedures (enacted by law in 1999) requiring residency permits for religious workers.

On April 14, 2000, the Government decided to establish an intergovernmental commission to investigate whether the activities of religious, esoteric, or spiritual groups comply with the law. It includes representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, the General Prosecutor's Office, and State Security. The Minister of Justice appoints the chairman of the commission. The commission was established as a response to parliamentarians' calls for increased control of "sects" following negative coverage of some religious groups in the media. The Government defended the move, stating that it had established the commission on the recommendations (No. 1412 and No. 1178) of the Council of Europe.

According to the Constitution, state and local teaching and education establishments are secular. At the request of parents, schools can offer classes in religious instruction. In practice, parents can choose classes in religious instruction or classes in ethics for nonreligious education.

The Law on Religious Communities and Associations provides that only religious instruction of traditional and other staterecognized religious communities may be taught in state educational institutions. However, nontraditional religious communities have the right to establish and have general education schools of their own.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities, although members of religious minorities occasionally are subject to acts of intolerance, such as insults.

Ten percent of the population before World War II were Jewish. Over 200,000 Jews (about 95 percent of that population) were killed in the Holocaust. The country still is reconciling itself with its past and working to understand it better. President Valdas Adamkus established a historical commission in August 1998 to investigate both the crimes of the Holocaust and the subsequent Soviet occupation. Two annual conferences were held and one commission report has been filed on the prewar period after the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pacts. Other grants have been issued for research on the war and post-war periods. However, a certain level of anti-Semitic sentiment persists in the country.

In 1998 Jewish community leaders expressed their concern regarding desecration at the cemetery in Kaunas and at a monument marking a former cemetery site in Vilnius. Although authorities responded promptly in both cases, no witnesses were found and no charges were brought.

In 1999 there was increased concern by the country's Jewish communities with regard to anti-Semitic comments made by some politicians. In April 2000, a politician known for making anti-Semitic and derogatory comments towards Jews and foreigners was elected mayor of the country's second largest city, Kaunas.

In April 2000, the Lithuanian Catholic Church apologized for indifference and crimes committed by the Lithuanian people during the Holocaust. The statement included the first recognition by the Lithuanian Church that some Lithuanians participated in the killing and mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust.

A number of ecumenical organizations operate in the country.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains a close and regular dialog on religious issues with senior officials in the Government, Members of Parliament, and presidential advisors, as well as continual contact with religious leaders. Religious groups use the Embassy as a vehicle to voice their complaints and the Embassy encourages religious leaders to keep the Embassy informed of their views on the status of religious freedom and any complaints.

The Embassy maintains regular contact with U.S. missionary groups. In late 1999, the Embassy intervened to assist in the resolution of their complaints regarding residency permit procedures.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy's democracy commission funded a number of projects with the goal of promoting greater religious tolerance, particularly those related to building broader understanding of the Holocaust.

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**LUXEMBOURG**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There is no state religion nor does the State register religions or religious groups. However, based on the Concordat of 1801, when the country was under Napoleonic rule, some churches receive financial support from the State. The Constitution spe-

cifically provides for state payment of the salaries of clergy. Currently, after negotiated agreements with the Government, the following churches receive such support: Roman Catholic; Greek and Russian Orthodox; Jewish; and some Protestant denominations. The conventions were signed October 31, 1997, by the Minister of Religion and the church representatives and adopted into law on July 10, 1998. Applications for financial support from the Anglican Church and the Muslim community have been under consideration for over 3 years without resolution. No such application for financial support ever has been refused. Several local governments maintain sectarian religious facilities.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country is historically Roman Catholic, and Catholicism remains the predominant faith. According to a 1979 law, the Government may not collect or maintain statistics on religious affiliation, but over 90 percent of the population are estimated to be Catholic. The Lutheran and Calvinist churches are the largest Protestant denominations. There is a considerable range of other creeds represented in small numbers; the number of professed atheists is believed to be very small. The largest group of foreigners is from Portugal (61,647 in a total population of 452,450); most Portuguese are Roman Catholic.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups. Many religious groups described as "sects" have representations in the country (largely for financial reasons). They are expected to obey the law, but their activities have not become significant political or social issues.

There is a long tradition of religious education in public schools. A convention signed on October 31, 1997, by the Minister of National Education and the Roman Catholic Archbishop governs religious instruction. In accordance with this convention, religious instruction is a local matter, coordinated at the communal level between representatives of the Church and communal authorities. Government-paid lay teachers provide instruction (totaling 2 school hours) at the primary school level. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Roman Catholicism or an ethics course; requests for exemption from religious instruction are addressed on an individual basis. The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist Churches have an agreement for the provision of instruction in the Protestant religions within the overall framework of religious instruction in the school system. There are oral agreements between Catholics and Protestants at the local level to provide religious instruction to Protestant students, as required, during school hours. Protestant instruction is available on demand, and provision of instruction in other faiths may develop in response to demand.

The State subsidizes private religious schools. All private, religious, and non-sectarian schools are eligible for and receive government subsidies. The State also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

There are no government-sponsored inter-faith activities.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### FORCED RELIGIOUS CONVERSION OF MINOR U.S. CITIZENS

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths work well together on an inter-faith basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

#### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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## FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the various religious communities contribute to the free practice of religion. However, the religious communities often reflect an ethnic identity as well, and societal tensions along those ethnic lines exist. The law places some limits on religious practice, for example, by restricting the establishments of places of worship and restricting where contributions may be made.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. However, the law places some limits on religious practices including the establishment of places of worship and the collection of contributions. Despite the specific mention of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the Constitution, that Church does not have official status.

The constitutional provision for religious freedom is refined further in the 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups. This law designates the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic community, and the Roman Catholic Church as religious communities, and all other religions as religious groups. However, there is no legal differentiation between religious communities and groups. In early 1999, the Constitutional Court struck down several provisions of the 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups, and in practice the remaining provisions of the law are not enforced consistently.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. The 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups contained a number of specific requirements for the registration of religious groups that were struck down by the Constitutional Court in early 1999. Consequently, there was considerable confusion over which procedures still applied, and several foreign religious bodies experienced delays in their efforts to register. During the period covered by this report, the Government acted to make the remaining requirements more transparent, but the process remained slow and cumbersome. In practice, religious groups need to register to obtain permits to build churches, and to request visas for foreigners and other permits from the Government. A committee has been formed to draft a new law. During 1999 at least one international Protestant church was granted legal registration, and several others are at some stage of the process. One Islamic group withdrew its 1998 application for registration but continues to operate openly without taking further steps toward legal registration. The Government has not taken any enforcement actions against the group. In 1998 the Government rejected the application for registration of another Islamic group headquartered in a third country. The group lodged a judicial appeal that is now under review in the court system. An Islamic Roma group applied for registration in 1998, and the Government rejected its application on technical grounds. The group resubmitted its application, and the Government granted the group legal registration. The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups also requires that foreign nationals carrying out religious work and religious rites be registered with the Government's Commission on Relations with the Religious Communities. The Government does not actively monitor new groups or advise the public on them.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country has three major religions. Nominally, about 66 percent of the population of 2 million are Macedonian Orthodox, about 30 percent are Muslim, about 1 percent are Roman Catholic, and about 3 percent are of other faiths. The other faiths are largely various Protestant denominations. No reliable estimate is available for the number of atheists. The Islamic faith is prevalent among ethnic Albanians, who primarily live in the western part of the country and in the capital, Skopje. The Roman Catholic community is concentrated in Skopje.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups places some restrictions on the establishment of places of worship. It provides that religious rites and reli-

religious activities “shall take place at churches, mosques, and other temples, and in gardens that are parts of those facilities, at cemeteries, and at other facilities of the religious group.” Provision is made for holding services in other places, provided a permit is obtained at least 15 days in advance. No permit or permission is required to perform religious rites in a private home. The law also states that religious activities “shall not violate the public peace and order, and shall not disrespect the religious feelings and other freedoms and rights” of persons who are not members of that particular religion. The Government does not actively enforce most of these provisions of the law but acts upon complaints when they are received.

Several registered Protestant groups were unable to obtain building permits for new church facilities during 1998 due to normal bureaucratic complications that affect all new construction. Several churches and mosques are currently under construction despite the lack of appropriate building permits.

The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups also places some limitations on the collection of contributions by restricting them only to places where religious rites and activities are conducted.

Children below the age of 10 years may not receive religious instruction without the permission of their parents or guardians.

Numerous foreign missionaries are active and represent a very wide range of faiths, mostly Protestant. Many of these missionaries enter the country in connection with other work, often charitable or medical. The 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups specifically allows for foreign citizens to carry out religious activities, but only at the request of a registered religious body. Because many evangelical Christian missionaries wish to conduct religious activities that are aimed at the creation of new groups of believers, rather than at operating through existing churches, some foreign missionaries have chosen to disregard this portion of the law. This approach has on occasion led to difficulties for those missionaries, as the authorities have questioned their actual reasons for entering the country, usually on tourist visas. On one occasion in 1998, the immigration officers successfully pressed for the voluntary departure of a group of American missionaries who had intended to live in the country and conduct religious activities while holding only tourist visas.

There were no reports that the Government refused Serbian Orthodox priests permission to enter the country as it had in previous years; however, as of mid-2000, no Serbian priests had applied to enter the country.

The issue of restitution of previously state-owned religious properties has not been resolved fully. Many churches and mosques had extensive grounds or other properties that were expropriated by the Communist regime. Virtually all churches and mosques have been returned to the ownership of the appropriate religious community, but that is not the case for many of the other properties. Often the claims are complicated by the fact that the seized properties have changed hands many times or have been developed. In view of the country's very limited financial resources, it is unlikely that religious communities can expect to regain much from the expropriated properties.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities. However, the religious communities often reflect an ethnic identity as well, and societal tensions along those ethnic lines exist. Specifically, most Muslims are ethnic Albanians, while virtually all Macedonian Orthodox believers are ethnic Macedonians. Societal discrimination is more likely to be based upon ethnic bias than upon religious prejudice.

The leaders of the long-established Orthodox, Muslim, and Roman Catholic communities have better connections within the Government than do the leaders of new churches, and there were some indications of an effort by the established religions to use that influence to shut out newcomers.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy initiated an extensive dialog with the Government's Commission on Relations with the Religious Communities, the office charged with the implementation of the Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups. This contact was sought after several American missionaries advised the Embassy that they were having difficulties in their efforts to register their organizations or workers.

The Embassy also intervened successfully in 1999 on behalf of two American students who wished to renew their residence permits. They were having difficulties that they believed were due to unconfirmed government suspicions that they were conducting unregistered religious activities.

The leaders of the various religious communities in the country, as well as the head of the Commission on Religious Communities and Religious Groups, met with the Ambassador on several occasions during the period covered by this report. In addition to including these leaders in invitations to general embassy functions, the Ambassador hosted them at a small private dinner in June 1999. The focus of that working dinner was the advancement of an ecumenical process in the country. During the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe implementation review meeting in Warsaw in November 1998, the U.S. delegation raised its concerns in public interventions and private meetings about the Government's registration requirements for religious organizations.

## MALTA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, and declares that the authorities of the Catholic Church have "the authority to teach which principles are right and which are wrong." The Government and the Catholic Church participate in a foundation that finances Catholic schools. The Church transferred nonpastoral land to this foundation as part of the 1991 Ecclesiastical Entitles Act. There is one Muslim private school. Some governmental policies, such as a ban on divorce, reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Since 1991 churches of all kinds (not just the Roman Catholic Church) have had similar legal rights: religious organizations can own property such as buildings, and their ministers can perform marriages and other functions.

While religious instruction in Catholicism is compulsory in all state schools, the Constitution establishes the right not to receive this instruction if the student (or guardian, in the case of a minor) objects.

The state-owned University of Malta hosts the UNESCO "Future Generations Programme" and in January 2000 conducted a program for the Mediterranean region entitled "An Interreligious Educational Agenda." Cabinet ministers and regional Muslim, Jewish, and Christian clergy discussed how to include religion in education and how to teach respect for various religious faiths.

*Religious Demography*

The overwhelming majority of citizens (approximately 95 percent) are Roman Catholic, and approximately 65 percent attend services regularly. While some political leaders diverge from Catholicism, most of the country's political leaders also are Roman Catholic.

Most congregants at the local Protestant churches are not Maltese; many British retirees live on Malta, and vacationers from many other nations compose the remainder of such congregations. Recently an indigenous Christian fundamentalist

movement has begun to develop; it remains small and consists of a group of about 400 citizens, but it is growing rapidly. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints also have an active missionary presence. The island has one Muslim mosque and one Jewish congregation. Zen Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith also have centers on the island. Of the 2,500 Muslims, 2,000 are foreigners, 400 are naturalized Maltese, and 100 are native-born Maltese.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The Roman Catholic Church makes its presence and its influence felt in everyday life. However, converts from Catholicism do not face legal or societal discrimination, and relations between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations generally are characterized by respect and cooperation.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Whenever possible, the Embassy advocates continued observance of basic human rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Both the Embassy's private discussions with government officials and its informational programs for the public consistently emphasize these points.

## MOLDOVA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law includes restrictions that at times inhibited the activities of some religious groups.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities. The law forbids "abusive proselytizing;" however, the authorities have not taken legal action against individuals for proselytizing.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a 1992 law on religion that codifies religious freedoms contains restrictions that could—and in some instances did—inhibit the activities of some religious groups. The law provides for freedom of religious practice, including each person's right to profess his religion in any form. It also protects the confidentiality of the confessional, allows denominations to establish associations and foundations, and states that the Government may not interfere in the religious activities of denominations. However, the law prohibits "abusive proselytizing" and requires that religious groups register with the Government.

The procedures for registering a religious organization are the same for all groups. The Government has recognized 19 religious organizations. Three additional religious organizations have pending applications for registration: the General Assembly of the Evangelist Union, the Church of the True Orthodox-Moldova (a branch of the Russian Overseas Orthodox Church), and the Mitropolia Basarabiei. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church was denied registration by the Government and is involved in ongoing litigation over this issue.

The Government denied recognition to the Bessarabian Orthodox Church in October 1992, March 1996, August 1996, and March 1997. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church was formed in 1992 when a number of priests broke away from the Moldovan Orthodox Church, which is subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. The

Bessarabian Orthodox Church, which sees itself as the legal and canonical successor to the pre-World War II Romanian Orthodox Church in Bessarabia (the part of Moldova between the Nistru and Prut Rivers), subordinated itself to the Bucharest Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Government consistently has refused to register the Bessarabian Church, citing unresolved property claims and stating that the Bessarabian Church is a "schismatic movement." The issue has political as well as religious overtones, as it raises the question as to whether the Orthodox Church should be united and oriented toward Moscow, or divided with a branch oriented toward Bucharest. (Leaders of the Moldovan Orthodox Church appear more interested in independence than in links to Moscow.) In 1997 the Supreme Court overturned an appellate court decision affirming the right of the Bessarabian Church to register with the Government. However, the Supreme Court's decision was based on a procedural issue rather than on the merits of the case. The Bessarabian Church appealed the case to the European Court of Human Rights in June 1998. The Government submitted its response in February 2000, arguing that registering the Bessarabian Church would interfere with an internal matter of the Moldovan Orthodox Church. There was no decision by mid-2000.

#### *Religious Demography*

The Moldovan Orthodox Church is the predominant religion and sometimes is favored over other religious groups. The most visible area of favoritism is the restitution of property expropriated during the successive Nazi and Soviet regimes. The Church had little difficulty in recovering its property and, in cases where property was destroyed, the Government offered alternative compensation. High ranking church officials also reportedly have diplomatic passports issued by the Government.

Over 90 percent of the population nominally belong to the Orthodox Church (with the Moldovan Church claiming over 1,000 parishes and the Bessarabian Church claiming close to 100). Followers of the Old Russian Orthodox Church (Old Believers) make up approximately 3.6 percent of the population. Other registered groups include: Roman Catholics; Baptists; Pentecostals; Seventh-Day Adventists; Jehovah's Witnesses; Baha'is; and Hare Krishnas. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has one congregation. The Jewish community has approximately 60,000 members, with about 45,000 living in Chisinau. There are 9 synagogues in Chisinau, Balti, Tiraspol, and Bender; about 5,000 persons celebrate Rosh Hashanah.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The law on religion as amended to legalize proselytizing—in principle bringing the legislation in line with the European Convention on Human Rights—went into effect in June 1999. However, the law explicitly forbids "abusive proselytizing," which is defined as "an attempt to influence someone's religious faith through violence or abuse of authority." Thus far authorities have not taken legal action against individuals for proselytizing.

Foreign missionaries are allowed to enter the country and represent many faiths and denominations. They experience the same difficulties in getting residence permits and customs clearances as other foreign workers.

In the 1999–2000 school year, the history of religion was studied as an optional course. Approximately 1,200 students in two districts enrolled during the school year. During the 2000–2001 school year, in conformity with a February 25, 2000 decree by Parliament, religious instruction will be obligatory for primary-school students and optional for secondary and university students. There are two public schools and a kindergarten open only to Jewish students. These schools receive the same funding as the state schools, and are supplemented by financial support from the community. Jewish students are not restricted to these schools. There are no comparable schools for Moldovan Orthodox believers and no reports of such schools for other religious faiths. Agudath Israel has operated a private boys' yeshiva, licensed by the Ministry of Education, since 1991, and opened a girls' yeshiva in November 1999. There are a number of theological institutes, seminaries, and other places of religious education throughout the country.

The law provides for restitution to politically repressed or exiled persons whose property was confiscated. This regulation has been extended in effect to religious communities. The Moldovan Orthodox Church has received restitution or compensation for nearly all of its prewar property that was expropriated. The Church has recovered churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and administrative properties. Property disputes between the Moldovan and Bessarabian Churches have not been resolved. The Jewish community has had mixed results in recovering its property. The Baptist Church has only one remaining property restitution claim.

In January 1998, authorities in Transnistria (a separatist region not under the control of the Government) canceled the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses. Repeated attempts by Jehovah's Witnesses to reregister have been denied or delayed. Transnistrian officials regularly confiscate religious tracts from Jehovah's witnesses, most recently in January 2000, because the group is not registered properly. According to local leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses, two preachers were arrested and detained for several days in April 1999. The Church of the Living God has been denied registration in five towns in Transnistria. Baptist leaders have complained that they are not allowed to distribute religious literature or organize public meetings in Transnistria. Non-Orthodox groups complain that they generally are not allowed to rent property and often are harassed during religious services.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the various religious communities. The dispute between the Moldovan and Bessarabian Orthodox Churches is ongoing, but the members generally worship freely. No significant ecumenical movements or activities were reported.

In May 1999, a group of about 500 Orthodox Christians and between 4 and 6 priests attacked a small group of Baptists in the village of Mingir, injuring 3 and partially destroying a Baptist church that was under construction. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is investigating the case, but no charges had been filed by mid-2000. The village mayor who was implicated in the incident lost his bid for reelection. The Baptist church was allowed to register locally and has continued the construction project.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Moldova hosted several roundtable discussions on freedom of religion. These discussions followed the Helsinki Committee's publication, in February 1999, of a book, *Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion in the Republic of Moldova*, containing the major international and national declarations, laws, and cases concerning religious freedom.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officers also have met with Baptist leaders and government officials to discuss the restitution of Baptist property in Chisinau.

The U.S. Ambassador met with the leaders of the major religious organizations at various times during the period covered by this report. He and other embassy officers also attended the opening ceremonies for the Agudath Israel girls' yeshiva. Embassy employees met with leaders and members of most of the major religious groups, including the Bessarabian Orthodox Church. Embassy employees maintain official or social contact with most of the resident American missionaries. The Embassy has supported religious (and secular) groups that provide humanitarian assistance to the country.

The Embassy's human rights officer maintains regular contact with religious leaders throughout the country, including in the separatist Transnistria region. In May 2000, the Embassy nominated a group of young parliamentarians—including a counselor for the Bessarabian Orthodox Church and a Baptist minister—to visit the United States as part of the Department of State's international visitor program.

## MONACO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable; however, proselytizing is strongly discouraged.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

Roman Catholicism is the state religion. Most citizens adhere to Roman Catholicism. The Constitution provides the nearly 25,000 noncitizens who live in the principality with the same religious freedom as the approximately 6,000 citizens.

##### *Religious Demography*

There are five Catholic churches in the principality and a cathedral presided over by an archbishop. The Catholic Mass generally plays an important role in state festivities, such as the annual national day celebration. Protestantism is the next most practiced religion, with two churches in the principality. Most noncitizens also adhere to either Catholicism or Protestantism, although there are some residents who adhere to Judaism, Islam, or other world religions. There are no mosques or synagogues in the principality.

##### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

No missionaries operate in the principality; proselytizing is strongly discouraged. There is no law against proselytizing; however, any group or association that wants to be active must, under the Civil Code, obtain permission to operate from the Government, and religious "sects" routinely are denied such permission.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

##### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities present in the principality are amicable.

#### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Consulate in Marseille, France discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## THE NETHERLANDS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Constitution permits the Government to place restrictions on the exercise of religion only on limited grounds, such as health hazards, traffic safety, and risk of public disorder.

The Calvinist Reformed Church enjoyed a privileged status until 1795. It received Government subsidies and only church members could hold public office. Church and state have been separate since 1798. However, the Government provides state subsidies to religious organizations that maintain educational facilities. The Government provides funding to public as well as to religious schools, other religious edu-

cational institutions, and religious health care facilities, irrespective of their religious affiliation. In order to qualify for funding, institutions must meet strict non-religious based criteria for curriculum standards, minimum size, and health care.

#### *Religious Demography*

Approximately 30 percent of the population consider themselves Roman Catholic, 15 percent Dutch Reformed, 7 percent Calvinist Reformist, 8 percent non-Christian (Islamic, Hindu, Jewish or Buddhist), and 40 percent atheist or agnostic.

Dutch society has become increasingly secular. According to the Government's Social Cultural Planning Bureau, church membership has declined steadily from 76 percent in 1958 to 41 percent in 1995 and still is decreasing, although at a slower pace. The breakdown within this 41 percent is 20 percent Roman Catholic, 9 percent Dutch Reformed, 6 percent Calvinist Reformist, 2 percent Muslim, and 4 percent other. Membership is decreasing among all denominations, except Islam, which is expected to become the second largest religion in the country within the next decade.

About 24 percent of citizens are active within their religious communities. One in three Roman Catholics goes to church at least once a month. About one in two Dutch Reformed members and two of three Calvinist Reformists do the same. Those who leave a church rarely return.

Nonetheless, significant numbers of those who have left their churches still consider themselves to be members of a religious group. About 60 percent of citizens claim adherence to a religion. However, the beliefs and practices of many of these adherents have developed into what some describe as a selective approach to religion: accepting the positive but not the negative aspects of a particular religion. About 20 percent of citizens, primarily among those who have left the "traditional" churches, describe themselves as "seekers of spiritual or philosophical truths." These persons tend to gravitate toward (though not necessarily join) newer or non-Orthodox religious movements, such as Pentecostal groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, Theosophy or Anthroposophy.

In the wake of secularization since the 1960's, many Roman Catholics left the Church. Among those remaining, many express alienation from their religious hierarchy and doctrine. For example, most Dutch Catholics express no objections to female or married priests and differ with church thinking on a number of sensitive doctrinal issues.

Dutch Protestantism is quite heterogeneous. Among the Protestant churches, the Dutch Reformed Church remains the largest, although it is also the one that has suffered the greatest losses to secularization. Church membership in this denomination has declined by two-thirds in the past 50 years. The second largest Protestant group, the Calvinist Reformist Church, has been less affected by membership losses and even has succeeded in attracting former members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Other Protestant denominations include Baptists, Lutherans, and Remonstrants.

The country has a long tradition of providing shelter to non-Christian religions. Jews have been in the Netherlands since the late 16th century. By the beginning of World War II, the Netherlands counted 125,000 Jews, half of whom lived in Amsterdam. About 110,000 were killed by the Nazi regime. Following the war, more than 10,000 citizens emigrated to Israel. The current Jewish community includes fewer than 20,000 members but is thriving and operates its own schools.

Only 49 Muslims lived in the country in 1879. After 1960 the number of Muslims began to rise due to the arrival of migrant workers, primarily from Morocco and Turkey. Family unification increased their numbers to 234,000 Moroccans and 279,000 Turks by 1998 (out of a total population of 16 million). Additional Muslims came from the former Dutch colony of Suriname. In the past decade, Muslim numbers further increased due to the large numbers of asylum seekers from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia. By 1998 about 700,000 persons, or 4.4 percent of the population, were Muslim—the majority Sunni.

Islam is growing quickly. There is a network of mosques and cultural centers. Mosques and centers are organized to conform to the country's system of subsidies, which underwrites cultural activities geared to social orientation and promotion of equal opportunities. The number of mosques has grown to over 300. The increased influence of Islam also is reflected in the founding of over 30 Islamic schools, which is facilitated by legislation that recognizes and provides equal funding to schools representing different religious or philosophical backgrounds.

The law provides for minority views to be heard on radio and television. Thus, broadcasting time has been allotted to the Islamic Broadcasting Foundation, an alliance of all Muslim groups in the country.



The Government of Turkey exercises influence within the Dutch-Turkish Islamic community through its religious affairs directorate, the Diyanet, which is permitted to appoint imams for the 140 Turkish mosques in the country. There is no such arrangement with the Moroccan Government that allows it to appoint religious officials to Moroccan mosques. The Moroccan Government tries to exercise influence over the approximately 100 Moroccan mosques through a federation of Moroccan friendship societies. Dutch authorities have not been pleased with Turkish and Moroccan interference with religious and political affairs because it appears to run counter to government efforts to encourage integration of Muslims into Dutch society. For example, government authorities insist on strict observance of mandatory school attendance up to the age of 16. They disapprove of appeals by foreign imams to keep sexually mature girls under the age of 16 at home. To counter such influence the authorities have proposed training imams in the Netherlands itself, a measure that is opposed within the Islamic communities.

A sizable community of about 90,000 Hindus has arrived from the former Dutch colony of Suriname. The country also hosts smaller groups of Hindus who came from India and Uganda, as well as such movements based on Hindu teachings as Ramakrishna, Hare Krishna, Sai Baba, and Osho. The Buddhist community is quite small, with about 17,000 members.

There were no reports of foreign missionary groups operating in the country.

Disputes have arisen when the exercise of the rights to freedom of religion and speech clashed with the strictly enforced ban on discrimination. Such disputes are addressed either in the courts or by anti-discrimination boards. In November 1999, a clergyman of the Pentecostal church in the town of Hengelo was acquitted in court on charges of discriminating against homosexuals. In a public letter he called homophilia, pedophilia, and polygamy "filthy sins." In its verdict the court reaffirmed longstanding jurisprudence that such a statement made on religious grounds did not constitute a criminal offense if the intention to offend or discriminate against homosexuals was deemed absent.

The Equal Opportunities Committee in July 1999 ruled that an educational institute in The Hague acted incorrectly by denying two young women training as shop workers because they were wearing headscarves on religious grounds. The institute rejected them because it believed that they would not be able to find employment after training if they continued to wear headscarves. With this ruling the Equal Opportunities Committee reaffirmed its opinion that the wearing of headscarves may be banned only on serious grounds, such as security considerations.

In other areas, employers have been rebuked publicly for failure to allow non-Christians leave on their religious holidays, for objecting to Sikhs wearing turbans or Muslim women wearing headscarves, or to observance of food requirements on religious grounds. The Equal Opportunities Committee in July 1999 ruled against a company that had denied employment to a Turkish applicant because he intended to attend Friday service at a mosque. This was considered a violation of freedom of religion. According to the Committee, Friday service for Muslims is the same as Sunday service for Christians. It ruled that employers are obliged to take account of reasonable religious demands from their employees, except in exceptional circumstances.

The Calvinist Reformist Social Union (RMU) charged that the 1996 law on working hours contributed to discrimination. This law permits work on Sunday under certain circumstances. Based on a survey among 2,000 companies, the RMU reported that job applicants increasingly are turned down if they refuse for religious reasons to work on Sunday. The larger labor federations reacted by calling for agreements between labor and management on the practice of religion during working hours. This matter usually does not lead to problems; however, if problems arise the federations made clear their intention to call upon offending employers to observe this fundamental right. The legislature is working on an amendment to the laws on working hours and business hours to permit employees to claim time off for the practice of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who have been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious communities live alongside each other in harmony. The main Christian denominations participate in the National Council of Churches and have adopted an ecumenical approach to inter-faith relations. The Council regularly presents common positions of the churches on matters of faith, church, and society. Protestant denominations in particular are significant promoters of Israel and the Jewish cause. The Protestant churches also reach out to the Islamic community. Incidents of anti-Semitism are rare; however, there were a number of complaints about anti-Semitism on Internet sites set up by Dutch citizens. The Discrimination on the Internet Registration Center recorded 181 complaints in 1999 about discriminatory statements, racial discrimination, or anti-Semitism on the Internet. Most statements were removed voluntarily by the authors at the Center's request. Two complaints were passed to the Public Prosecutor when the authors refused to remove the controversial texts from the Internet. Decisions on the two cases are still pending.

Ethnic minorities are occasional victims of incidents of discrimination. Non-Europeans, such as Turks, Moroccans or refugees from Iran and Iraq are occasional victims of discrimination, but primarily on racial or ethnic grounds and not because they are Muslims. Examples of religious discrimination incidents are primarily of an anti-Semitic nature and involve use of swastikas, distributing neo-Nazi propaganda, and making the Hitler salute. The labor federations have been working to include in collective bargaining agreements stipulations that permit non-Christian employees to take leave on non-Christian religious holidays. Such stipulations have now been included in most agreements.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Promoting religious freedom around the world is a high priority goal of Dutch foreign policy. The U.S. Embassy works very closely with the Government to promote religious freedom.

In March 2000, Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Robert Seiple and David Saperstein, Chairman of the Commission on Religious Freedom, met with government officials to discuss U.S. and Dutch initiatives to advance understanding of the issue. The Government has supported efforts to monitor religious persecution more closely and has instituted additional reporting requirements for its own embassies.

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## NORWAY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway is the state church. It is supported financially by the State, and there is a constitutional requirement that the King and one-half of the Cabinet belong to this church. The relationship between the church and the state regularly generates discussion. Church officials have spoken in favor of a greater separation in the state-church relationship. However, there have been no significant developments in this debate during the period covered by this report.

A religious community is required to register with the Government only if it desires state support, which is provided to all registered denominations on a proportional basis in accordance with membership.

*Religious Demography*

Citizens are considered members of the state church unless they explicitly associate themselves with another denomination; 93 percent of the population nominally belong to the state church. However, actual church attendance is considered to be rather low. Other denominations operate freely.

In 1999 there were a total of 238,354 persons registered in religious communities outside the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, of a total population of approximately 4.5 million. An additional 29,353 persons belong to unregistered religious communities while 68,253 were members of the nonreligious Norwegian Humanist Association.

The major registered religions and religious groups are: Pentecostal congregations (44,094 members); Islam (45,145 members); Roman Catholic Church (40,203 members); Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (20,899 members); Jehovah's Witnesses (15,083 members); Methodist Church of Norway (13,204 members); Norwegian Baptist Union (10,404 members); Church of Norway Mission Covenant (8,182 members); and the Buddhist Federation (6,779 members). Other groups include Orthodox Jews, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, and Hindus. In addition, there is one main organization for the nonreligious or atheists—the Norwegian Humanist Association. The Association has 61,000 registered adult members and 10 to 12,000 children as associate members. Persons cannot register as full members until they reach early adulthood.

Members of registered religious communities outside the state church are concentrated in the Oslo region and the west coast region of the country. The Hordaland, Rogaland, and Vest Agder districts have the highest number of members of religious communities outside the state church. The majority of European and American immigrants are either Christians or nonreligious, the exception being Muslim refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo. Most non-European immigrants practice Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism.

Foreign missionaries and other religious workers operate freely in the country. Foreign religious workers from countries whose citizens Norway requires visas need to obtain such visas before entering the country. In addition, all foreign religious workers from countries outside the European Union or European Economic Area must apply for work permits. There is no government registration of foreign religious workers beyond the regularly established database of issued work permits.

The Government promotes inter-faith understanding by providing funding to the Cooperation Council for Faith and Secular Society (see Section II). The Government also pledged to provide additional funds for the operation of the Office of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Intolerance. As Chair-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) during 1999, the Government promoted activities to improve religious tolerance through the OSCE.

In October 1995, the Storting (Parliament) passed a law introducing the subject "Religious Knowledge and Education in Ethics" in the school system. The legality of imposing compulsory teaching of Christianity and Christian ethics in public schools has been contested in court by both the Norwegian Humanist Association and the Moslem Council. Both lost their initial cases in Oslo city court and have appealed to a higher regional court. The appeals are scheduled to take place in the fall of 2000. Currently, the law has been implemented in all public schools. On special grounds students may be exempted from participating in or performing specific religious acts such as church services or prayer, but may not forgo instruction in the subject as a whole. Students and workers who belong to minority denominations are allowed leave for the celebration of their religious holidays.

In July 1998, the Government suspended two priests in the Church of Norway and asked the courts for approval legally to terminate their priesthood due to insubordination and disloyalty. The conservative priests, serving in a rural community, openly had refused to accept religious and spiritual guidance from their liberal bishop based in the provincial capital. The parties were in disagreement on a number of social issues (such as gay rights). In January 2000, the Alta county court ruled that the two local priests could not be fired due to insubordination and disloyalty. The Minister of Church Affairs has appealed the decision to the Haalogaland district court.

The Workers' Protection and Working Environment Act permits prospective employers to ask job applicants for positions in private or religious schools, or in day care centers, whether they respect Christian beliefs and principles.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In August 1998, the Cooperation Council for Faith and Secular Society organized a conference on religious freedom with financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conference urged greater international dedication to the principles of freedom of religion and issued the Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion and Belief. The Cooperation Council was established in 1996 and consists of the state church and other religious communities, including the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and secular humanist communities. At the 1998 conference, the Oslo Coalition for Freedom of Religious Beliefs was formed in order to facilitate closer coordination and international cooperation.

The Ecumenical Council of Christian Communities has promoted actively cooperation within the Christian community. There also has been cooperation between the various religious communities on human rights issues in recent years. Bilateral dialog between the state church and the Muslim and Jewish communities has generated statements in support of minority rights and human rights.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses worldwide religious freedom issues with government officials, particularly during the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Requests to the Embassy from official and nonofficial Norwegians for materials on religious freedom issues increased during the period covered by this report, a sign of growing interest in such issues as religious persecution, the church-state relationship, and the balance between freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

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**POLAND**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion; however, sporadic incidents of harassment and violence against Jews, and occasional desecration of Jewish and Catholic cemeteries continued, mostly generated by skinheads and other marginal elements of society.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy and Consulate General Krakow representatives actively monitor threats to religious freedom and seek to further resolution of unsettled legacies of the Holocaust and the Communist era.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There are 15 religious groups in the country whose relationship with the State is governed by specific legislation and 140 other religious communities. The legislation outlines the internal structure of the religious groups, their activities, and procedures for property restitution.

Religious communities may register with the Government, but they are not required to do so and may function freely without registration. According to new regulations effective as of June 1998, registration requires that the group have submitted the names of 100 members as well as information regarding the group itself. This information on membership (i.e., signatures) must be confirmed by a notary public (previously only 15 names were required), although the registration itself often appears to be a formality. Four new religious communities registered during the period covered by this report. All churches and recognized religious groups share the same privileges (duty-free importation of office equipment, reduced taxes, etc.).

In mid-2000, the Government announced plans to establish by September 2000 a department within the Ministry of Interior to monitor the activities of "new religious groups" and cults. As of the end of June 2000 the new department had not yet been formed.

#### *Religious Demography*

More than 95 percent of citizens are Roman Catholic, but Eastern Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and much smaller Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim congregations meet freely.

According to the Annual Statistical Gazette of Poland, the following figures represent the formal membership of the listed religious groups, but not the number of actual members (e.g., the actual number of Jews in the country is estimated at between 10,000 and 30,000). There are 35,033,087 Roman Catholics in the country; 554,860 Orthodox Church members; 122,982 Jehovah's Witnesses; 110,380 Uniates; 87,291 Lutherans (Augsburg); 25,904 Old Catholic Mariavits; 23,969 members of the Polish-Catholic Church; 17,966 Pentecostals; 6,720 Seventh-Day Adventists; 5,894 Baptists; 5,438 members of the New Apostolic Church; 5,123 members of the Muslim Religious Union; 5,043 Hare Krishnas; 4,349 Methodists; 4,100 members of the Church of Christ; 3,980 Lutherans (Reformed); 3,011 Catholic Mariavits; 1,222 members of the Union of Jewish Communities; 950 members of the Eastern Old Ceremonial Church; and 180 members of the Karaims Religious Union. All of these churches have a relationship with the State governed by either legislation or treaty, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Uniate Church, the New Apostolic Church, Hare Krishnas, and the Church of Christ.

According to a 2000 poll, some 68 percent of citizens actively participate in religious ceremonies; a 1999 poll found that 8 percent declared that they have no contact with the Catholic Church. The 1999 survey found women to be more religious than men, with 63 percent of the former attending church regularly compared with 51 percent of the latter. Farmers are the most religious group: 70 percent are regular churchgoers, while only 2 percent do not go to church at all. No figures are available on the number of atheists in the country, although one recent poll found that 4 percent of respondents said that they did not believe in God.

Citizens enjoy the freedom to practice any faith they choose. Religious groups may organize, select, and train personnel, solicit and receive contributions, publish, and engage in consultations without government interference. There are no government restrictions on establishing and maintaining places of worship.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely in the country and are subject only to the standard rules applicable to foreigners temporarily in the country.

Although the Constitution provides for the separation of church and state, a crucifix hangs in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament, as well as in many government offices. In June 1998, a provincial court decided that a crucifix hung in the meeting room of the Lodz city council in 1990 could remain, denying the complaint of a city resident. An atheist complained that the crucifix threatened religious freedom and discriminated against him.

State-run radio broadcasts Catholic Mass on Sundays, and the Catholic Church is authorized to relicense radio and television stations to operate on frequencies assigned to the Church, the only body outside the National Radio and Television Broadcasting Council allowed to do so.

Although the Constitution gives parents the right to bring up their children in compliance with their own religious and philosophical beliefs, religious education classes continue to be taught in the public schools at public expense. While children are supposed to have the choice between religious instruction and ethics, the Ombudsman's office states that in most schools ethics courses are not offered due to financial constraints. Although Catholic Church representatives teach the vast majority of religious classes in the schools, parents can request religious classes in any of the religions legally registered, including Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish religious instruction. Such non-Catholic religious instruction exists in practice, although it is not common, and the Ministry of Education pays the instructors. Priests and other instructors receive salaries from the state budget for teaching religion in public schools, and Catholic Church representatives are included on a commission that determines whether books qualify for school use.

In January 1998, the Parliament ratified the Concordat, a treaty regulating relations between the Government and the Vatican, which was signed in 1993. The vote came after years of bitter disputes between Concordat supporters and opponents over whether the treaty simply ensures the Catholic Church's rights or blurs the line between church and state. Subsequently signed by the President, the Concordat took effect in April 1998.

The Government continues to work with both local and international religious groups to address property claims and other sensitive issues stemming from Nazi- and Communist-era confiscations and persecutions. The Government enjoys good relations with international Jewish groups. The Government cooperates effectively with a variety of international organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, including the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, which identifies and encourages the preservation of historic sites associated with the heritage of American citizens from eastern and central Europe, to include cemeteries and houses of worship.

Progress continues in implementing the laws that permit local religious communities to submit claims for property owned prior to World War II that subsequently was nationalized. In 1997 a law was passed permitting the local Jewish community to submit claims for such property, which mirrored legislation benefiting other religious communities. The laws allow for the return of churches and synagogues, cemeteries, and community headquarters, as well as buildings that were used for other religious, educational, or charitable activities. The laws included time limits for filing claims; in several cases the deadlines have expired and no additional claims may be filed. However, restitution commissions (composed of representatives of the Government and the religious community) are continuing adjudication of previously filed claims.

The time limit for applications by the Catholic Church expired in December 1991. As of the summer of 2000, 2,413 of the 3,041 claims filed by the Church had been concluded, with 1,123 claims settled by agreement between the Church and the party in possession of the property (usually the national or a local government), 844 properties were returned through decision of the Commission on Property Restitution, which rules on disputed claims, 434 claims were rejected, and 12 cases were likely to go to court. Claims by the local Jewish community (whose deadline for filing claims under the 1997 law expires in 2002) are being filed slowly. Of the thousands of potential claims, only 458 had been filed by the summer of 2000, mainly because the country's Jewish community lacks the information and financial resources to prepare claims more quickly. Of those 458 claims, the Commission on Property Restitution considered and closed 98 cases; 53 of the 98 cases were closed by an agreement between the parties. As of early 2000, Lutheran claims for 1,200 properties had resulted in 392 cases being closed with the return of the properties in question (the deadline for filing such claims was July 1996).

However, the laws on religious communal property do not address the private property of any group. In September 1999, the Government's Council of Ministers approved a draft reprivatization law. The bill was amended in committee in a way that would have made it impossible to address the claims of former Polish citizens living abroad. The Government opposed the amendment and the committee has since changed the draft to allow once again for claims by persons who were citizens at the time the property was seized, as well as by their heirs. The bill remains in committee and could see additional changes.

The laws on communal property restitution also do not address the issue of communal properties to which third parties now have title, leaving several controversial and complicated cases unresolved. In a number of cases over the years, buildings and residences were built on land that included Jewish cemeteries that were destroyed during or after World War II. For example, a school for disabled children now stands on the site of a completely destroyed Jewish cemetery in Kalisz. The existence of the school complicated the issue of returning the cemetery to the Jewish community. Efforts continued in 1999–2000 to reach a resolution acceptable to all concerned.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Current law places Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities on the same legal footing, and the Government attempts to address the problems that minority religious groups face. Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable, although the erection by radical nationalist anti-Semites of

some 300 crosses near the former Auschwitz concentration camp caused tensions in Catholic-Jewish relations in 1998–99.

Anti-Semitic feelings persist among certain sectors of the population, occasionally manifesting themselves in acts of vandalism and physical or verbal abuse. However, surveys in recent years show a continuing decline in anti-Semitic sentiment and avowedly anti-Semitic candidates fare very poorly in elections.

In March 1998, a controversy arose over the “Pope’s Cross,” located on the grounds of a former Carmelite convent in Oswiecim adjacent to the Auschwitz concentration camp museum. The Cross originally adorned the altar at a mass conducted by Pope John Paul II near Birkenau in 1979 and was erected at the site of the Carmelite mission in 1989. The Cross is clearly visible from the former camp’s block 11 and marks the site where Polish political prisoners (possibly including Catholic priests) and later Jewish prisoners were murdered by the Nazis. In August 1998, radical nationalist anti-Semites erected dozens of additional crosses outside Auschwitz in protest of plans to remove the Pope’s Cross, despite the opposition of the country’s bishops. In May 1999, the Parliament passed a government-sponsored law to protect the sites of all the former camps in the country. The Government consulted with international Jewish groups in preparing the law, which gave the Government the power it needed to resolve the issue of the “new crosses.” In late May 1999, the leader of the Defenders of the Pope’s Cross, Kazimierz Switon announced that he had laid explosives under the site where the crosses were erected, and that he would detonate them if the Government attempted to remove him or the crosses. Police officers quickly arrested Switon for possessing explosives and making public threats. After Switon’s arrest, local authorities removed the crosses to a nearby Franciscan monastery, under the supervision of the local bishop, and sealed off the site to prevent the erection of additional crosses. The Pope’s Cross is not to be removed from the site for the time being.

Sporadic and isolated incidents of harassment and violence against Jews continue to occur in the country, often generated by skinheads and other marginal societal groups. Occasional cases of cemetery desecration, including both Jewish and Catholic shrines, also occurred during 1999 and the first half of 2000. Government authorities consistently criticized such actions and pledged to prevent similar acts in the future, for example by increased police patrols around Jewish sites.

In July 1999, unknown vandals sprayed swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti on the Jewish community headquarters in Bielsko-Biala. According to the mayor of Bielsko-Biala, city police officers were ordered to guard the building after the attack and an investigation was opened into the case; however, there were no results by mid-2000. Anti-Semitic graffiti were painted on several monuments in the Tarnow Jewish cemetery in August 1999; the incident was criticized by the local bishop. In September 1999, vandals attacked several tombs in the Warsaw Jewish cemetery, leaving satanic graffiti and damaging a number of monuments. The chief of the Prime Minister’s chancery immediately criticized the vandalism.

In February 2000, near Katowice, some 60 graves were desecrated in what apparently was an attempt to steal and sell the stones from the local Catholic cemetery. Later in the month, two other Catholic cemeteries were desecrated with Satanist graffiti, one near Zamosc and one near Wroclaw. In March 2000, teenage hooligans vandalized a monument to martyred priest Jerzy Popielusko.

Also in March 2000, the citizens of Lodz took action of their own accord to clean up anti-Semitic (and other) graffiti in the town. The same evening as the clean-up, vandals spray-painted anti-Semitic and anti-Roma graffiti on the home of Marek Edelman, the last surviving commander of the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising. The attack was criticized strongly by both the President and the Prime Minister.

In April 2000, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma graffiti were painted on the wall of the Jewish cemetery at Oswiecim (Auschwitz). The town paid to have the graffiti removed. Also in April, on two successive nights, vandals in Krakow painted swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti on the walls of a local museum, whose site once had housed a pharmacy operated by the only non-Jewish Pole to live in the Krakow ghetto. Local police promised to step up patrols in the area. The same month, Satanist graffiti defaced some 20 gravestones in a Catholic cemetery in a village near Poznan.

Investigations continued into the May 1998 desecration of graves in the Warsaw Jewish cemetery and the July 1998 vandalism of a plaque commemorating Jewish Holocaust victims in Rzeszow. No charges have been filed to date, and the Rzeszow case is still under investigation. In the case of the 1997 beating of a 14-year-old Jewish boy in Gdansk, the defendant received a 4-year suspended sentence. The attack may have been linked to a sermon by controversial Gdansk priest Henryk Jankowski warning against the presence of Jews in the Government.

The March 1999 publication of a booklet by Opole University professor Dariusz Ratajczak denying the Holocaust triggered severe public criticism in March and April of the year. The booklet was self-published (a total of 230 copies), and as soon as it became aware of the publication, the university banned its distribution on school property, criticized its contents, and suspended the professor pending further disciplinary action. Ratajczak's trial began in November 1999 on charges of violating the law on the preservation of national memory, which took effect on January 1, 1999 for "disseminating the Auschwitz lie." In December 1999, the Opole district court acquitted him and ruled that the "social threat" posed by the book was low, given the low number of copies published, and that in the book's second edition and in Ratajczak's public appearances he criticized the revisionist views of historians who deny the Holocaust. The university, which is state run, fired him in April 2000 for violating ethical standards, and he was banned from teaching at other universities for 3 years.

The Parliament (Sejm) is currently considering a law whose provisions could allow for the restoration of citizenship to Jews who were forced to emigrate during a Communist anti-Semitic campaign in 1968.

In May 2000, during the 12th March of the Living from Auschwitz to Birkenau to honor victims of the Holocaust, several hundred Poles joined the presidents of Israel and Poland as well as some 6,000 marchers from Israel and other countries. This was the largest participation of Polish citizens in the event to date. Government officials participating in the march included Members of Parliament, the province's governor, and Oswiecim's mayor and city council chairman. Schoolchildren, boy scouts, the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society, and the Jewish Students Association in Poland also participated in the march.

The Jewish community faced a continuing battle, which began in April 1999, between Gdansk's local Jewish community and the leadership of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland (ZGZ), involving accusations of mismanagement of community funds.

There is some public concern about the growth of groups perceived to be "sects" and the influence of nonmainstream religious groups, especially in the wake of press reports of the deaths of a few young persons in circumstances suggesting cult activity.

Inter-faith groups work to bring together the various religious groups in the country.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Representatives of the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General, up to and including the Ambassador, continue to monitor closely issues relating to religious freedom and inter-faith relations; one officer devotes the vast majority of his time to questions of Polish/Jewish relations, for example. Embassy and consulate officers meet frequently with representatives of religious communities, the Government, and local authorities on such matters as property restitution, skinhead harassment, and inter-faith cooperation.

Embassy and consulate representatives actively monitor threats to religious freedoms; the Embassy intervened to assure rapid police response to threatening demonstrations by skinheads against the Jewish community of Wroclaw in 1998. The Embassy and Consulate General work as well to facilitate the protection and return of former Jewish cemeteries throughout the country.

On a regular basis, embassy and consulate officials discuss issues of religious freedom, including property restitution, with a wide range of government officials at all levels. The Embassy and the Consulate General play a continuing role in ongoing efforts to establish an international foundation to oversee restitution of Jewish communal property. A U.S. Government mediator worked with the two sides (the Polish Union of Jewish Religious Communities and the World Jewish Restitution Organization) to resolve outstanding differences that have delayed establishment of such a foundation. In June 2000, the sides reached agreement. The sides must now submit the appropriate documentation to a Polish court so that the foundation can be registered as a non-profit organization.

Embassy and consulate representatives, including the Ambassador, also meet regularly with representatives of major religious communities in the country. The Ambassador holds regular consultations with Primate Glemp and meets with religious leaders, including leaders of the Jewish community, both in the capital and during his travels throughout the country.

The public affairs sections of the Embassy and the Consulate in Krakow provided continuing support for activities designed to promote cultural and religious tolerance. Such activities included a digital videoconference linking young Poles with



U.S. participants in the March of the Living; a 2-week voluntary visitor program for senior administrators at the Auschwitz-Birkenau state museum; and ongoing press and public affairs support for the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation and its project to renovate the last remaining synagogue in Oswiecim.

## PORTUGAL

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

Portugal is a secular state. Other than the Constitution, the two most important documents relating to religious freedom are the 1971 Law on Religious Freedom and the 1940 Concordat (as amended) between Portugal and the Holy See. Under this legal regime, the Roman Catholic Church has several privileges not granted to other religions. For example, the Catholic Church is completely exempt from the country's value-added tax, whereas other religions only can exempt expenditures related directly to worship. The Catholic Church has exclusive control over the naming of military, prison, and hospital chaplains.

Since 1975 there has been a very liberal regime for recognizing churches. Ministers of all faiths are also permitted to participate in the country's social insurance scheme.

In recent years, minority religious groups, particularly evangelical Christians, have called for an updated law on religious freedom to replace the 1971 law. In April 2000, Communist and left bloc deputies in the Parliament introduced a bill that would have ended not only the special privileges enjoyed by the Catholic Church, but also the tax breaks, religious instruction in schools, and other privileges enjoyed by all religions. The bill was defeated, as expected. A second bill was introduced by the governing Socialist Party and was debated during the spring. The Socialist bill would preserve religious instruction in schools and continue tax breaks for religious bodies, allowing taxpayers to dedicate half a percent of their taxes to religious projects. Religious communities would have to have been present in the country for at least 30 years to qualify for these benefits. This bill has wide support, and the only controversy is over whether the country should first pass a new religious freedom law such as this one and then renegotiate the Concordat with the Vatican, or whether it should first renegotiate the Concordat and then pass a new religious freedom law. As of mid-2000, the first approach appeared to have greater support. The Catholic Archbishop of Lisbon endorsed the Socialist bill; however, noting the important historical role that the Catholic Church has played in the country. The Archbishop did not express a view as to which should come first, the bill or a new Concordat, calling them separate issues. Prior to the Pope's visit to Portugal and the shrine of Fatima in May 2000, the country's Catholic bishops met to compile their recommendations to the Vatican on revisions to the Concordat.

#### *Religious Demography*

More than 80 percent of the population above the age of 12 identify with the Roman Catholic Church. About 2 percent identify with various Protestant denominations, and about 1 percent with non-Christian religions. Less than 3 percent say that they have no religion.

Non-Christian religions include about 25,000 Muslims (largely from Portuguese Africa, ethnically sub-Saharan African or South Asian), a small number of Jews, and very small groupings of Buddhists, Taoists, and Zoroastrians. A small Hindu community also exists, which traces its origins to South Asians who emigrated from Portuguese Africa and the former Portuguese colony of Goa in India. Many of these minority communities are not organized formally.

Brazilian syncretistic Catholic Churches, which combine Catholic ritual with pre-Christian Afro-Brazilian ritual such as Candomble and Ubanda, also operate in small numbers, as do the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Orthodox Christians. The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), a proselytizing church that originated in Brazil, also exists.

Public secondary school curriculums include an optional course called "religion and morals." This course functions as a survey of world religions and is taught by a lay person. It can be used to give Catholic religious instruction. The Catholic Church must approve all teachers for this course. Other religions can set up such a course if they have 15 or more children in the particular school. There are about 100 such non-Catholic programs in the country.

The Government takes active steps to promote inter-faith understanding. Most notably, 5 days a week state television channel (Radiotelevisao Portuguesa 2) broadcasts "A Fe dos Homens"—"The Faith of Man"—a half-hour program consisting of various segments written and produced by different religious communities. The Government pays for the segments and professional production companies are hired under contract to produce the segments.

The concept behind "The Faith of Man" originated in 1984, when minority religious communities began to request broadcast time on RTP television. In 1997 arrangements for such broadcasts were regularized and formalized and the program was launched. Religious communities send delegates to a special television commission, which determines the scheduling of segments. The television commission has operated on the general rule that religious communities eligible for the program are those that have been operating for at least 30 years in the country or at least 60 years in their country of origin.

The Catholic Church owns a television station, Televisao Independente. Its programming is basically indistinguishable from that of other stations.

Foreign missionary groups (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) operate freely.

Major Catholic holidays are also official holidays. Seven out of the country's 16 national holidays are Catholic holidays. The Papal Nuncio is always the dean of the diplomatic corps.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. Many communities conduct "open houses" or sponsor inter-faith education seminars. Sunday Mass is broadcast live. The Roman Catholic Church regularly broadcasts its television program, "Seven Times Seventy."

In May 2000, the Islamic center in Lisbon hosted visiting Nobel Peace Prize winner and East Timorese bishop Ximenes Belo at a special prayer for East Timor. The event was covered by the Portuguese press, and attended by government officials, leaders from the country's other religious communities, and members of the diplomatic corps. In 2000 the municipality also revealed plans to light the Islamic center mosque at night (as are other prominent landmarks in Lisbon), and to rename its street "Rua da Mesquita"—the street of the mosque.

Also in 2000, a project was begun in the Azores to restore the old synagogue in Ponta Delgada, which was constructed in 1836 and abandoned 60 years ago. This project is the culmination of 15 years of lobbying by the Azores Synagogue Restoration Committee, and is supported by both the regional government of the Azores, the Portuguese-American community, and universities in both countries. The synagogue is not to be used for worship (the number of Jews in the Azores is virtually zero) but is to serve as a monument to the country's Jewish heritage. In April 2000, the Portuguese National Heritage Association commemorated International Monuments Day at the synagogue.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy representatives have discussed issues and problems of religious freedom with government officials, members of the National Assembly, broadcasting

executives, and leading religious figures in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. These contacts are ongoing.

## ROMANIA

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, several minority religious groups continued to claim credibly that low-level government officials and Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts at proselytizing, as well as interfered with other religious activities.

The status of respect for religious freedom has improved slightly during the period covered by this report; however, religious life continues to be ruled by old laws that reinforce government discrimination in favor of certain religious groups.

There are generally amicable relations among the different religious groups; however, the Romanian Orthodox Church has attacked the "aggressive proselytizing" of Protestant, neo-Protestant, and other religious groups, repeatedly described as "sects." Government registration and recognition requirements still pose obstacles to minority religions, and restitution of religious property remains a problem.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy engaged actively in encouraging respect for religious freedom, pressing strongly with religious and political leaders for the withdrawal of the draft religion bill and the restitution of religious property.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, several minority religious groups continued to claim credibly that low-level government officials and Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts at proselytizing, as well as interfered with other religious activities.

Since the Government has not adopted a new law, the Communist era decree 177 of 1948 remains the law of the land, and it allows considerable state control over religious life. Technically, none of the articles of this law have been abrogated, but, according to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, a large number of its articles have been nullified in practice by the Constitution and a series of governmental decrees. Though several religious denominations and religious associations confirmed that articles stipulating the State's interference with or control over religious life and activities have not been enforced, such provisions still exist in the law.

Under the provisions of Decree 177 of 1948, the Government recognizes 14 religions. In addition to this, a December 1989 decree reestablished the Greek Catholic Church, which had been dismantled by a Communist decree in 1948. Only the clergy of these 15 recognized religions are eligible to receive state support. Recognized religions have the right to establish schools, teach religion in public schools, receive funds to build churches, pay clergy salaries with state funds and subsidize their housing expenses, broadcast religious programming on radio and television, apply for broadcasting licenses for denominational frequencies, and enjoy tax-exempt status. The number of adherents each religion had in the last census (1992) determines the proportion of the budget each recognized religion receives. The Romanian Orthodox religion, in accordance with its size as recorded in the 1992 census, receives the largest share of governmental financial support. In addition mostly Orthodox religious leaders preside over state occasions. In 1999 the Government allocated funds amounting to almost 1 million dollars (approximately 15 billion lei) to the Roman Catholic Church and close to \$650,000 (over 9 billion lei) to the Greek Catholic Church (both budgetary and off-budget funds) for the construction of churches.

The Government requires religious groups to register. To be recognized as a religion, religious groups must register with the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and present their statutes, organizational, leadership, and management diagrams, and the body of dogma and doctrines formally stated by a religion. According to Article 13 of Decree 177 of 1948, a religious group can acquire religion status by decree, issued at the Government's initiative, with the prior recommendation of the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations. Representatives of religious groups that sought recognition after 1990 allege that the registration process was arbitrary and unduly influenced by the Romanian Orthodox Church, and that they did not receive clear instructions concerning the requirements. The Organization of the Or-

thodox Believers of Old Rite, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Adventist Movement for Reform, the Baha'i Faith, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) are some of the religious groups that have tried unsuccessfully to register as religions. The Baha'i Faith stated that it has never received any answer to its repeated requests to be registered as a religious denomination. Jehovah's Witnesses also complained that the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations consistently had refused to grant it status as a religion.

Not one religious group has succeeded in receiving religion status since 1990. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations stated that this was due to the provisions of Article 13 of Decree 177 of 1948, which stipulates the recognition of religious denominations by a decree issued by the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly—a Communist body that passed laws but does not exist any more. Since no new legislation has been passed in this regard, the State Secretariat stated that the registration of any new religion is not possible.

The Government registers religious groups that it does not recognize as “independent religions” either as religious and charitable foundations or as cultural associations. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported that it has licensed 622 religious and charitable foundations, as well as cultural organizations, under Law 21 of 1924 on Juridical Entities, thereby entitling them to juridical status as well as to exemptions from income and customs taxes. According to Article 18 of Decree 177 of 1948 on Religion, religious and charitable foundations, to be recognized as juridical entities, must request and receive approval from the Government through the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations. After receiving the approval, such organizations have to apply for registration in local court, which has the final authority under the law to register religious organizations, but the courts frequently defer to the opinion of the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs. Several religious organizations have complained that, in most cases, the courts do not accept their registration without approval of the State Secretary of Religions. These organizations receive no financial support from the State, other than limited tax and import duty exemptions, and are not permitted to engage in profit-making activities. Moreover, religious groups registered as foundations or charitable organizations are allowed to rent or build office space only; they are not permitted to build churches or other buildings designated as houses of worship. According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, such religious groups receive building permits only for halls of prayer because the legislation in force makes reference only to religions and does not include any provisions for religious associations. The differentiation between religions and religious associations with regard to the construction of places of worship appears to be an arbitrary decision by the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations.

A government decree on associations and foundations became effective on May 1, 2000. Upon its coming into effect, Law 21 of 1924 was abrogated. The new law eliminates, at least in theory, the bureaucratic obstacles in the registration process, which repeatedly have been criticized by religious groups as arbitrary and time-consuming. (Smaller religious groups also have criticized the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations for its obstructionist tactics in favor of the Romanian Orthodox Church.) It also removes the minimum requirement of members required to establish religious associations and foundations.

After almost a decade of discussion and multiple drafts, a bill on religious denominations was approved suddenly by the Government in September 1999 and submitted to Parliament. Since the bill dramatically differed from any version discussed with the religious denominations and would have strengthened government regulation of religious activity, it generated a wave of criticism. Most religious denominations, religious and human rights groups, and foreign observers called for the draft law's withdrawal. If enacted, the law effectively would have restricted freedom of religion, by imposing tough conditions on the registration of religious denominations and religious groups and strengthening the powers of the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations. The draft law would have declared the Romanian Orthodox Church to be the national church. Confronted with strong criticism both domestically and abroad, the Government (headed by a new Prime Minister) in February 2000 decided to withdraw the bill and undertook to draft a new one based on democratic principles. However, completion of such a draft bill is not expected before the end of 2000.

#### *Religious Demography*

The Romanian Orthodox Church is the predominant religion in the country. The following are the number of believers in the historical religions (those recognized under the provisions of the 1948 decree), according to the disputed 1992 census: the Romanian Orthodox Church, 19,802,389 followers (86.8 percent of the population)

including about 50,000 Serbs and Ukrainians; the Roman Catholic Church, 1,161,942 followers; the Catholic Church of Byzantine Rite (Greek Catholics or Uniates), 223,327 followers. The census was taken in an atmosphere of intimidation that equated Greek Catholics with Hungarians, not Romanians. The Greek Catholic Church estimates that its adherents number close to 750,000 members. (The country's Greek Catholics were members of the Orthodox Church who accepted the four principles that were required for union with Rome in 1697, but observed the Orthodox festivals and many traditions from their Orthodox past). Among the other recognized religions, the Old Style Orthodox Church has 32,228 members; the Old Rite Christian Church has 28,141 believers (of whom 3,711 are ethnic Romanian and 24,016 are ethnic Lippovans/Russians); the Reformed (Protestant) Church has 802,454 believers (of whom 765,370 are ethnic Hungarians); the Christian Evangelical Church has 49,963 believers; the Evangelical Augustinian Church has 39,119 followers (of whom 3,660 are Romanians and 27,313 are ethnic Germans); the Lutheran Evangelical Church Synod-Presbyterian has 21,221 members (of whom 12,842 are ethnic Hungarians); the Unitarian Church of Romania has 76,708 believers; the Baptist Church has 109,462 believers; the Apostolic Church of God (Pentecostal Church) has 220,824 believers (400,000, according to Pentecostal reports); the Seventh-Day Christian Adventist Church has 77,546 members; the Armenian Orthodox and Catholic Churches have 2,023; Judaism has 9,670 followers, according to the 1992 census (the Jewish Community Federation states there are about 12,000 members); and the number of Muslims is 55,928.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, most religions have followers dispersed throughout the country, but a few religious communities are concentrated in particular regions in the country: the Old Rite (Lippovans) in Moldavia and Dobrogea; the Muslims in the southeastern part of the country in the Dobrogea area; most of the Greek Catholics in Transylvania but also in Moldavia; Protestant and Catholic churches in Transylvania, but also around Bacau; the Orthodox or Greek Catholic ethnic Ukrainians in the northwest area; the Orthodox ethnic Serbs in Banat; and the Armenians in Moldavia and the south.

According to published sources, the following religious denominations are also active in the country in the form of religious organizations: the Baha'i Faith, established in 1990; the Family (God's Children), established in 1990; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), which sent more than 100 missionaries to the country immediately after 1989; the Unification Church; the Methodist Church, established in 1990; Jehovah's Witnesses, established in 1990; the Presbyterian Church, established in 1995; Transcendental Meditation, legally registered in 1992; Hare Krishna; and Zen Buddhism.

According to a nationwide poll conducted in May 2000, 6 percent of those polled say that they go to church on a weekly basis; 25 percent claim to go several times per month; 28 percent attend services several times per year; 12 percent go only once a year or less; and 9 percent do not go to church at all.

In August 2000, the Government passed an ordinance on military clergy, according to which all recognized religious denominations are entitled to have military clergy, trained to render religious service to conscripts.

The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations stated that the Government does not have a policy of sponsoring or promoting inter-faith programs.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Although protected in law, several minority religious denominations made credible complaints that low-level government officials and Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts to proselytize. Members of religious communities not officially recognized as religious denominations by the Government presented credible accusations that government officials discriminated against them during the period covered by this report. The Government denies these allegations. Although under the Constitution persons are legally free to speak about their religious beliefs, some low-level government officials strongly discourage proselytizing. Representatives of some religious groups recognized only as religious associations credibly claimed that local officials pressure them to refrain from speaking out. In some instances, local police and administrative authorities tacitly supported, which were at times violent, societal campaigns against proselytizing (see Section II). There seems to be no clear understanding of what activities constitute proselytizing.

Minority religious groups asserted that they have found central government and parliamentary officials more cooperative than local officials. They specifically reported that communication with the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations has improved in recent months.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, about 1,000 missionaries per year who enter the country as tourists can renew their residence per-

mits without special formalities. They require only a formal letter of request from the religious group for which they work. Over the past year the process has become smoother and faster. Most religious groups said that they have not been faced with any problems other than minor delays in getting residence permit extensions for their missionaries. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations differentiates between missionaries of religious denominations, who receive 1-year extensions, and those of religious organizations, who are granted only 6-month extensions, apparently because of a protocol between the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and the Interior Ministry. However, minority religious groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, complained of receiving shorter-term extensions. There are penalties for any foreigner who stays over 30 days without a visa, but there is no evidence that these penalties were linked to religious activities.

Representatives of minority religious groups dispute the 1992 census results, claiming that census takers in some cases simply assigned an affiliation without inquiring about religious affiliation. Moreover, representatives of several minority religious groups complain that off-budget funds are allocated in many cases in a biased manner, mostly favoring the Orthodox Church. For example, minority religious groups complained that Orthodox churches were built in areas without Orthodox believers. According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, off-budget funds are distributed depending on the needs of the various religious denominations.

The Government's approach to building places of worship by organized churches varies, depending upon whether the organized religion is one of the 15 recognized religions or not. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported that, between January 1999 and April 2000, it granted 31 approvals to the Greek Catholic Church and 13 to the Roman Catholic Church for the construction of churches. Religious groups that are not among the 15 recognized religions receive approvals only for halls of prayer and not for places of worship. Several nonrecognized religious groups have made credible allegations that their efforts to acquire property, including getting building permits and other documents, have been delayed or impeded for lengthy periods of time by local officials. They believe these delays are encouraged by local Orthodox clergy. The new State Secretary for Religious Denominations, who took office in the fall of 1999, said that he had withdrawn an internal note issued by his predecessor, who had asked local authorities to deny building licenses to religious associations and foundations. As a result, it has been much easier to get licenses since then, though some religious groups still complain of delays.

In July 1999, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Seventh-Day Adventist high school students, who did not show up at one of the graduation exams because it was scheduled on a Saturday. Consequently they were entitled to take the exam in question on a different date and without paying a fee. In March 2000, the Supreme Court also issued two rulings that called for the official recognition of the status of Jehovah's Witnesses as a religious denomination.

The law does not prohibit or punish assembly for peaceful religious activities. However, several different nonrecognized religious groups complained that on various occasions local authorities and Orthodox priests prevented religious activities from taking place, even when they had been issued permits. The Evangelical Alliance mentioned incidents in particular in rural areas in Iasi and Vaslui counties, but also in Braila and Arges counties, where a movie about Jesus could not be shown in several villages (Sipote, Vladeni, Tufesti, Insuratei, and Dobresti) because of violent incidents, allegedly instigated by Orthodox priests supported by the police, who reportedly asserted that prior approval by the Orthodox priest and the local police was required for such activities.

The Government permits but does not require religious instruction in public schools. While the law permits instruction according to the faith of students' parents, some parents who practice minority religions complain that they have been unable to have classes offered in their faith in public schools. Teachers of religion are permitted to teach only those students who adhere to the same religion as the teacher.

Religious leaders occasionally play a role in politics. In particular, many Orthodox leaders make public appearances alongside prominent political figures on various occasions.

There is no law establishing procedures for restituting religious or communal property. Some of the properties in these categories, which were seized by the Communist regime, were returned to former owners as a result of government decrees or agreement of local religious leaders. However, in many cases religious minorities have not succeeded in regaining actual possession of the properties. In fact many of the properties returned by decree house state offices, schools, or hospitals that

would require relocation, and resolving this issue has delayed restitution of the property to rightful owners.

The Greek Catholic community has been less successful than any other group in regaining its properties. The Greek Catholic Church was the second largest denomination (about 1.5 million adherents out of a population of about 15 million) in 1948 when Communist authorities outlawed it and dictated its forced merger with the Romanian Orthodox Church. The latter received most of the former Greek Catholic properties, including over 2,600 churches and other facilities. The Greek Catholic Church made little progress in recovering its former properties. Of the 2,600 former Greek Catholic churches and other facilities that were transferred to the Orthodox Church by the Communist regime, only a handful have been returned. According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, the Greek Catholic Church has received 142 (the Greek Catholics claim they have received only 136) of the churches transferred by the Communists to the Orthodox Church. The Greek Catholic Church has very few places of worship. Many followers still are compelled to hold services in public places or parks (260 such cases, according to Greek Catholic reports) because most of the former Greek Catholic churches have not been returned. In 1992 the Government adopted a decree that listed 80 properties owned by the Greek Catholic Church to be returned. Only between 60 and 65 of them have been returned to date (the worst situation is in Maramures county and Bucharest.) In some cases, Orthodox priests whose families had been Greek Catholics converted back to Greek Catholicism and brought their parishes and churches back with them to the Greek Catholic Church. In several counties, in particular in Transylvania, local Orthodox leaders have given up smaller country churches voluntarily. For example, in the Diocese of Lugoj in the southwestern part of the country, local Orthodox Church representatives have reached agreement on the return of an estimated 160 of 2,600 churches; however, for the most part the Orthodox have refused to return to the Greek Catholics those churches that they acquired during the Communist era (Orthodox Archbishop of Timisoara Nicolae Corneanu was responsible for returning some of the churches, including the cathedral in Lugoj, to the Greek Catholic Church. However, due to his actions, the Orthodox Holy Synod marginalized Archbishop Corneanu, and his fellow clergymen criticized him.)

A governmental decree in 1990 called for the creation of a joint Orthodox and Greek Catholic committee to decide the fate of churches that had belonged to the Greek Catholic Church before 1948. However, the Government has not enforced this decree, and the Orthodox Church has resisted efforts to resolve the issue. The committee did not meet until October 1998 and had three more meetings in 1999. The courts generally refuse to consider Greek Catholic lawsuits seeking restitution, citing the 1990 decree establishing the joint committee to resolve the issue. However, the Orthodox Church consistently has resisted efforts to resolve the issue in that forum. From its initial property list of 2,600 seized properties, the Greek Catholic Church has scaled back the properties that it is asking back to fewer than 300—all of them churches—yet the only thing agreed upon at the joint committee meetings has been the date for the next meeting. Restitution of the existing churches is important to both sides because local residents, who prize tradition, are likely to attend the church no matter whether it is Greek Catholic or Orthodox. Thus the number of believers and share of the state budget allocation for religions is at stake. At the most recent meeting of the joint committee in November 1999, the Orthodox Church proposed to help the Uniates build new churches. However, such support has been almost nonexistent, according to Uniate reports. Since July 1999, the Greek Catholic Church has recovered fewer than 10 of its former churches (in Cluj, Blaj, and Oradea). A new meeting of the committee was scheduled for September 2000.

The historical Hungarian churches, including the Roman Catholic as well as the Protestant churches (Reformed, Evangelical, and Unitarian), have not received their properties back from the Government. Churches from these denominations were not seized by the Communist regime, just closed. However, the Communist regime confiscated many of their secular properties, which still are used for public schools, post offices, and student dormitories. Of the about 1,400 to 1,450 buildings reclaimed by the Hungarian churches, it has been able to take possession of only about 10. The Catholic Church of Romanian Language is in a similar situation.

The Jewish community reported in May 2000 that 21 of its properties had been returned by government decrees. However, the Jewish community has taken actual possession of only 5 of them, the rest having been restituted merely on paper so far.

Several religious communities have regained ownership of some of their schools, hospitals, residences, and other properties. In some cases this proved to be a disadvantage since the rightful owner could not take possession of the property because it was being used by the State, in which situation the owner receives minimal or

no rent but has to pay taxes as the property owner instead. For example, this was the case of the former Reformed College restituted to the Reformed Church in Cluj by government decree in 1999. The building currently is used as a high school, which does not pay any rent, and the Reformed Church has not been able to occupy the property. Compensation to any kind of former owner for properties that are not returned must be established by law; this issue remains with Parliament.

On June 22, 2000, the Government passed an emergency ordinance to allow restitution of 10 unspecified buildings (not churches) to each bishopric of each religious denomination from which property was seized during the Communist period. This ordinance requires a commission be established to determine which properties will be restored, a process that is expected to take time.

According to Law 1/2000 adopted by Parliament in December 1999 and signed into law in January 2000, religious denominations are entitled to claim between 10 and 100 hectares (25 to 250 acres) of farmland (depending on the type of religious unit—parish, eparchy, bishopric, etc.) and up to 30 hectares (75 acres) of forestland from properties seized by the Communists. This is the first law that establishes a systematic procedure for churches to claim land.

The Hungarian churches repeatedly have expressed dissatisfaction with the Government's failure to allow by law the establishment of confessional schools subsidized by the State.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

The status of respect for religious freedom improved slightly during the period covered by this report. Parliament passed a law entitling religious denominations to reclaim back farm and forestland, and the Government took steps to allow restitution of 10 unspecified buildings (not churches) to each bishopric. A government decree somewhat reduced the bureaucratic procedures required for the registration of religious associations and foundations. Two decisions by the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations have contributed somewhat to speeding up the process of granting visa extensions for religious workers and relaxed the policy of issuing construction licenses for religious associations and foundations.

Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-Day Adventists reported three court rulings upholding their rights to build places of worship and practice their faith, which apparently represent small steps toward increased religious freedom.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the different religious groups. However, the Romanian Orthodox Church has attacked the "aggressive proselytizing" of Protestant and other religious groups repeatedly (see Section I). Some prominent members of society publicly criticized proselytizing.

There is no law against proselytizing. However, the dominant Orthodox Church repeatedly and publicly has criticized what it described as proselytizing by various religious groups. Proselytizing that involves denigrating established churches is perceived as provocative. There seems to be no clear understanding of what activities constitute proselytizing. This sometimes has led to conflicts. According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, the local Orthodox clergy in Mizil (Prahova county), with the tacit support of the local police and administration, started a campaign at the beginning of 2000 aimed at barring activity by Jehovah's Witnesses. Anti-Jehovah's Witnesses flyers were spread in the town, denouncing it as a fanatic and criminal sect, and Jehovah's Witnesses repeatedly were harassed and assaulted, allegedly at the instigation of an Orthodox youth league tied to the Orthodox Church.

In addition, the dialog between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic churches has not eliminated disputes at the local level and has led to little real progress in solving the problem of the restitution of the Uniate assets (see Section I).

Disputes between Greek Catholics and Orthodox believers over church possession in several localities occasionally became heated during the period covered by this report. In Arduș the Orthodox Church first reached agreement to share the local church with the Greek Orthodox community in the same town, but subsequently changed its mind and the lock on the church door. Eventually, the Uniates decided to build a new church. In Bicsad the Uniates obtained a government decision allowing them to take possession of a former Greek Catholic monastery, but they were stopped by agitated local residents led by Orthodox priests. In Sercaia the Greek



Catholic Church regained its former church after a series of violent incidents, with Orthodox believers allegedly instigated by the local Orthodox priest. In Dumbraveni the Orthodox Church's opposition to a court-ordered proposal to share the local church has forced the Uniates to hold their religious services in a high school.

The centuries-long domination of the Orthodox Church, and its status as the majority religion, has resulted in the Orthodox Church's reluctance (in particular at the local level and with the more or less direct support of low-level officials) to accept the existence of other religions (especially new ones.) Consequently, actions by other religious groups to attract believers are perceived by the Orthodox Church as attempts to diminish the number of its followers (see Section I). Due to its broad range of influence, few politicians dare to sponsor bills and measures that would oppose the Orthodox Church. According to minority religious groups, the population is receptive to minority Christian confessions; it is the Orthodox clergy that was at the root of isolated mob incidents.

Most mainstream politicians have criticized publicly anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia. However, the fringe press continued to publish anti-Semitic harangues.

In October 1999, a court sentenced Mihai Bogdan Antonescu, editor of the weekly *Atac la Persoana*, to a 2-year suspended sentence for publishing articles that were intended to spread intolerance toward Jews. The Jewish Community Federation reported that Jewish cemeteries were desecrated in 10 localities in 1999. The perpetrators have not been identified in any of these cases, but are believed to have been local hooligans, rather than an organized anti-Semitic movement. In April 2000, a letter warning about the danger of the expansion of the Legionnaire Movement, sent to the President, government officials, and Parliament by the Jewish Community Federation failed to generate any reaction by any of the addressees. However, the Jewish Community Federation praised the local authorities in Timisoara and Iasi for taking a prompt stand against anti-Semitic graffiti in February 2000.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy also maintains close contact with a broad range of religious groups in the country. Embassy staff, including the human rights officer, political counselor, and the Ambassador, met with religious leaders and government officials who work on religious affairs in Bucharest and in other cities.

In addition, embassy staff members are in frequent contact with numerous non-governmental organizations that monitor developments in the country's religious life. U.S. officials have lobbied consistently in government circles for fair treatment on property restitution issues, including religious and communal properties. The Embassy has a core group of officials who focus on fostering good ethnic relations, including relations between religious groups.

The U.S. Embassy took an active stand against the reactionary religion bill approved by the Cabinet and sent to Parliament in September 1999. Embassy staff lobbied heads of all the major political parties, key government officials including the Prime Minister, and members of the relevant parliamentary committees. In addition, the Embassy encouraged other western embassies and religious groups in the country to engage in parallel lobbying actions. The Secretary of State also raised the issue during Romanian Foreign Minister Petre Roman's visit to the United States. The bill was eventually withdrawn in February 2000.

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## RUSSIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state, in practice the Government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions, and some local authorities imposed restrictions on some religious minority groups. The commitment of the new Government under President Vladimir Putin to adhere to international standards of religious freedom remained unclear by mid-2000.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The 1997 law on religion, which replaced a more liberal 1990 law, continues to be the focus of serious concern about the state of religious freedom in the country.

One of the law's most controversial provisions is a requirement that a church must prove that it has existed for at least 15 years in the country before it is allowed to be registered as a full-fledged religious organization. (Registration as a religious organization is necessary in order for a religious community to rent or buy a facility, proselytize, publish literature, provide religious training, or conduct other activities.) In a November 1999 ruling, the Constitutional Court upheld the 15-year requirement but also permitted the registration of organizations that already were registered when the 1997 law was passed or that were willing to become a local branch of a larger registered denomination. The provision still severely restricts the activities of small, new, independent congregations. The 1997 law also requires that all religious organizations be registered by December 31, 2000. Due to several factors, the registration process has been slow, and a large number of religious organizations may remain unregistered by the end of 2000 and therefore may be subject to "liquidation" (that is terminated as a legal entity) by local authorities at the end of 2000. The lack of clarity in the 1997 law, combined with contradictions between federal and local law and varying interpretations of the law, furnish regional officials with pretexts to restrict the activities of religious minorities. Discriminatory practices at the local level also are attributable to the increased decentralization of power over the past several years and the relatively greater susceptibility of local governments to lobbying by majority religions, as well as to government inaction and discriminatory attitudes that are widely held in society. For example, articles heavily biased against religions considered "nontraditional" appear regularly in both the local and national press. There were reports of harassment of members of religious minority groups. Several religious communities were forced to defend themselves in court from charges by local authorities that they were engaging in harmful activities; however, in many cases local courts demonstrated their independence by dismissing frivolous cases or rulings in favor of the religious organizations. As of mid-2000, it remained unclear whether any religious organization had ceased operations as a result of the 1997 religion law.

The U.S. Government has been active in encouraging respect for religious freedom. The U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Consulates General actively investigated reports of violations of religious freedom, including anti-Semitic incidents. U.S. officials discuss these issues with a broad range of government officials, representatives of religious groups, and human rights activists on a daily basis.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state, in practice the Government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions, and in some instances local authorities imposed restrictions on some groups.

In December 1990, the Soviet Government adopted a law on religious freedom designed to make all religions equal before the law. (After the breakup of the Soviet Union, this law became part of the Russian Federation's legal code.) The 1990 law forbade government interference in religion and established simple registration procedures for religious groups. Registration of religious groups was not required; however, by registering groups obtained a number of advantages, for example, the ability to establish official places of worship and benefit from tax exemptions.

During the early and mid-1990's, many sectors of society, particularly nationalists and many members of the Russian Orthodox Church, were disturbed by a sharp increase in the activities of well-financed foreign missionaries. Many advocated limiting the activities of what they termed "nontraditional" religious groups and what sometimes were called "dangerous" or "totalitarian" sects. In October 1997, the Duma enacted a new, restrictive, and potentially discriminatory law on religion, which raised questions about the Government's commitment to international agreements honoring freedom of religion. This law replaced the progressive 1990 religion law that had helped facilitate a revival of religious activity. Passage of the law and its signature by then-President Boris Yeltsin prompted concern in the international community because, for the first time since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Government had adopted legislation that could abridge fundamental human rights. Although President Yeltsin had rejected earlier drafts of the law, the Presidential Administration considered the last version the least objectionable and concluded that, in view of the political situation, any further veto would have been overridden.

In its preamble (which government officials insist has no legal force), the 1997 religion law recognizes the "special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture." It

accords “respect” to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and certain other religions as an inseparable part of the country’s historical heritage.

The 1997 religion law ostensibly targeted so-called “totalitarian sects” or dangerous religious cults. However, the intent of some of the law’s sponsors appears to have been to discriminate against members of foreign and less well-established religions by making it difficult for them to manifest their beliefs through organized religious institutions. The critics of the law believe that the basic assumption behind the law is that religious groups must prove their innocence and their legitimacy before gaining the advantages of state recognition. Government officials, including then-President Boris Yeltsin and then-Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, pledged that the law on religion would not result in any erosion of religious freedom in the country. As of mid-2000, the Presidential Administration under President Putin has yet to comment on the law. Presidential Administration officials have established consultative mechanisms to facilitate government interaction with religious communities and to monitor application of the law on religion. The Government continues to attempt to mitigate some of the law’s most negative aspects and has shown some willingness to intervene with local authorities in defense of religious rights.

Government officials, some nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s), and religious freedom experts believe that President Vladimir Putin’s emphasis on centralization of power and strengthened rule of law could lead to improvements in the area of religious freedom. Putin has promised stricter and more consistent application of all laws. However, some other NGO’s, religion-law experts, and representatives of religious groups point out that stricter implementation of the 1997 religion law could create opposite results. On one hand, stricter implementation of the 1997 federal law in the regions could compel some reluctant local authorities to stop blocking local registration of “nontraditional” religions. On the other hand, stricter implementation also could require local authorities to “liquidate” (that is terminate as a legal entity) by court order organizations that have failed to register by December 31, 2000. An amendment to extend the registration deadline in the 1997 law, signed on March 27, 2000 by President Putin, also changed a key phrase: organizations still unregistered after the deadline “are subject to liquidation” (rather than the previous text’s “may be liquidated”). Some observers believe that the law now appears to require liquidation of unregistered organizations; however, other religion law experts consider the more precise phrasing, which appears to require the liquidation of all organizations that are unregistered by the deadline, less likely to be enforced, since the authorities would be unwilling to liquidate the large number of Russian Orthodox groups that they expect to remain unregistered at that time.

Given the inadequacy of regulatory guidance from the federal authorities on how to apply the 1997 law correctly, the shortage of knowledgeable local officials registering by the end of 2000 is expected to be a significant obstacle for many religious groups. Human rights observers remain deeply concerned that President Putin has not expressed a firm commitment to freedom of religion publicly and point to the continued public association of the Presidential Administration with the Russian Orthodox Church as evidence of favoritism.

In May 2000, President Putin took a significant step toward increasing federal control in the regions by signing a decree dividing the country into seven federal districts and naming to each of the seven regions a presidential representative. The Presidential Administration also reportedly is conducting a review of regional legislation that conflicts with federal law and the Constitution, including regional religion laws. According to the Presidential Administration, 30 of 89 regions have laws and decrees on religion that violate the Constitution by restricting the activities of religious groups; presumably they would have to be changed. However, as of June 30, 2000 it remained unclear whether the Federal Government had the necessary legal mechanisms and political will to bring all religion legislation into compliance with federal law.

The office of the Russian Federation Human Rights Plenipotentiary (a government entity created by the Parliament in 1997 and tasked with promoting human rights) has announced that it is setting up a department dedicated to religious freedom issues. Oleg Mironov of the office of Plenipotentiary publicly criticized the 1997 religion law in a memo to the Duma in April 1999 and recommended changes to bring it into accordance with the Constitution and international norms for religious freedom.

The 1997 law on religion is very complex, with many ambiguous and contradictory provisions. On its face, the law creates various categories of religious communities with differing levels of legal status and privileges. The law distinguishes between religious “groups” and “organizations,” two mutually exclusive registration categories, and creates two categories of organizations: “regional” and “centralized.” A

religious "group" is a congregation of worshipers that does not have the legal status of a juridical person, meaning that it may not open a bank account, own property, issue invitations to foreign guests, publish literature, or conduct worship services in prisons and state-owned hospitals. Groups are permitted to rent public spaces and hold services. Moreover, the law does not purport to abridge the rights of individual members of groups. For example, a member of a religious group could buy property for the group's use, invite personal guests to engage in religious instruction, and import religious material. However, in this case, the group would not enjoy tax benefits and other rights extended to religious organizations, such as proselytizing.

In contrast to religious groups, religious organizations, both local and centralized, are considered juridical persons, enjoy tax exemptions, and are permitted to proselytize, establish religious schools, host foreign religious workers, and publish literature. The law provides that congregations that had existed for 15 years when the new law was enacted were eligible for registration as an organization. A "centralized religious organization" may be founded by a confession that has three functioning "local organizations" (each of which must have at least 10 members who are Russian citizens) in different regions. A centralized organization apparently has the right to establish affiliated local organizations without adhering to the 15-year rule. In implementing this provision, the Government has extended this definition to include a "registered centralized managing center."

The provisions that require that religious groups exist for 15 years before they may qualify for "organization status" and that relegate other religious entities to the status of "groups" are among the most controversial elements of the 1997 law. Critics of the law claimed that these articles violated the Constitution's provision of equality before the law of all confessions.

A constitutional challenge to the law on religion was filed with the Constitutional Court in May 1998 by the NGO the Institute for Religion and Law. It was based on the cases of a Khakasiya Pentecostal church and the Yaroslavl Jehovah's Witnesses. The petitioners claimed that the provision of the 1997 religion law requiring religious organizations to prove 15 years of existence in Russia in order to be registered is unconstitutional. In a November 23, 1999 hearing, the Constitutional Court upheld the 15-year provision but also ruled that religious organizations that were registered before the passage of the 1997 law were not required to prove 15 years' existence in the country in order to be registered. The Constitutional Court also upheld the right of the Government to place certain limits on the activity of religious groups in the interests of national security. The Institute and other experts described the decision as a sound and legally correct compromise.

However, under this ruling independent churches with less than 15 years in the country still are not able to register as religious organizations unless they affiliate themselves with existing centralized organizations. The Institute for Religion and Law and other NGO's point out that this is a significant restriction for small, independent religious communities. Some human rights activists also are concerned by language in the ruling that cites 1993 and 1996 decisions in the European Court of Human Rights regarding religious "sects," and upholds the right of the Government to place certain limits on the activity of religious groups in the interests of national security.

Despite the Federal Government's efforts to implement the religion law liberally and to provide assurances that religious freedom would be observed, restrictions continued at the local level. The vagueness of the law and regulations, the contradictions between federal and local law, and varying interpretations of the law provide regional officials with a pretext to restrict the activities of religious minorities. Discriminatory practices at the local level are attributable to the increased decentralization of power and the relatively greater susceptibility of local governments to lobbying by majority religions, as well as to national government inaction and prejudicial attitudes that are widely held in society. Concerns continue that a large number of religious organizations may remain unregistered by the end of 2000 and therefore may be even more vulnerable to attempts by local authorities to restrict their activities.

Since 1994 30 of the country's 89 regional governments have passed laws and decrees intended to restrict the activities of religious groups. At the time the 1997 religion law was under discussion, its proponents argued that it was necessary in order to deal with the many restrictive local laws. However, the federal Government has not challenged effectively the unconstitutionality of these restrictions, although the Presidential Administration sent warnings to 30 regions regarding the unconstitutionality of local laws. Critics contend that the Federal Government should be more active in preventing or reversing discriminatory actions taken at the local level by more actively disseminating information to the regions and, when necessary, reprimanding the officials at fault. Observers also have proposed that the federal

authorities take action to ensure that regional and local legislation or other actions do not contradict constitutional provisions protecting religious freedom. As part of President Putin's initiative to centralize power, the Presidential Administration currently is conducting an overall review of regional legislation and has stated that religion laws also would be addressed by this initiative.

The Russian Orthodox Church was involved actively in drafting the 1997 law on religion. It has made special arrangements with government agencies to conduct religious education and to provide spiritual counseling to Russian military service members. These arrangements do not appear to be available to other religions. (In particular, Muslim religious leaders have complained that they are not permitted to minister to Muslim military service members.) The head of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, participates in most high-level official events and appears to have direct access to and influence with officials of the executive branch. The traditional view that Russian soil is an exclusively "Orthodox domain" leads to frequent criticism and intolerance of foreign religious groups that proselytize in the country. Many Orthodox Church officials condemn such "sheep stealing" when practiced by other Christian churches. Even well established foreign religious organizations have been characterized by some in the Orthodox leadership as "dangerous and destructive sects."

On June 4, 2000, news reports surfaced alleging that Chief Rabbi of Russia Adolf Shayeveich was urged by Presidential Administration officials to step down in favor of a prominent Lubavitcher rabbi, Berl Lazar. Rabbi Shayeveich later denied that the incident had occurred. On June 12, 2000, authorities arrested media magnate Vladimir Gusinskiy, the President of the Russian Jewish Congress President and a critic of the Government. On the same day, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia elected Rabbi Lazar Chief Rabbi of Russia, which created a schism in the Jewish community between supporters of Shayeveich and supporters of Lazar. This sequence of events aroused serious concern among many observers that the Presidential Administration was attempting to meddle in intraconfessional affairs and prompted the Russian Jewish Congress to accuse the Administration publicly of a "divide and conquer" strategy against the Jewish community. In addition, on June 19, 2000, the Minister of Culture signed an agreement with the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia giving it, along with other organizations, the right to negotiate on behalf of the Jewish community for restituted property.

Under the 1997 religion law, representative offices of foreign religious organizations are required to register with state authorities. They are barred from conducting liturgical services and other religious activity unless they have acquired the status of a group or organization. Although the law officially requires all foreign religious organizations to register, in practice foreign religious representatives' offices (those not registered under Russian law) have opened without registering or have been accredited to a registered Russian religious organization. However, those offices may not carry out religious activities and do not have the status of a religious organization.

#### *Religious Demography*

There are no reliable statistics that break down the country's population by denomination, but available information suggests that approximately half of all citizens consider themselves Russian Orthodox Christians (although the vast majority of these persons are not regular churchgoers). An opinion poll of 1,500 respondents conducted by Public Opinion in April 1999 found that 55 percent of the population consider themselves Orthodox Christian, 9 percent follow another religion, and 31 percent claim to be atheists. Another poll of some 4,000 respondents by the Center of Sociological Studies at Moscow State University in the spring of 1999 found that 43 percent claimed to be Orthodox Christians, while 51 percent described themselves as "religious believers" (not necessarily Orthodox). A separate poll found that in Moscow only 20 percent of respondents who identify themselves as Orthodox are regular churchgoers, while in the regions only 7 percent attend church regularly. According to January 2000 Ministry of Justice statistics, there are now 17,427 religious organizations registered nationwide. This figure represents a more than three-fold increase over the approximately 5,500 organizations registered in 1990. Over half of registered organizations are Russian Orthodox, 18 percent are Muslim, and 20 percent are Christian organizations other than Russian Orthodox. Jewish and Buddhist registered religious organizations each account for slightly less than 1 percent of the total number of organizations. Jehovah's Witnesses account for 2 percent of the total registered religious organizations, and the group reports that it has 250,000 members in the country. Ministry of Justice figures also show that approximately 5,000 nontraditional organizations are registered nationwide, representing a broad range of denominations and religious practices. Nontraditional registered or-

ganizations include Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Evangelical Christian-Baptists, Roman Catholics, Hare Krishnas, Seventh-Day Adventists, Lutherans, Bahá'is, and offshoots of Russian Orthodox Christianity, as well as 227 organizations representing less well-known denominations. Other religions, including Buddhism and Shamanism, are practiced in specific localities where they are rooted in local traditions.

An agreement signed on May 23, 2000, between two large Russian state radio networks and an international Christian broadcaster, Trans World Radio, provides for airing evangelical Christian programs on 750 transmitters throughout Russia. The broadcasts began on June 1, 2000 on Radio Mayak and Radio Yunost.

#### *Governmental Restrictions of Religious Freedom*

The Constitutional Court's November 1999 ruling effectively legalized a number of religious organizations that were registered at the time the 1997 law was passed but could not prove 15 years of operation in the country. For example, in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, the 15-year rule no longer prevents the registration of newly created local Jehovah's Witnesses religious organizations, nor the reregistration of organizations that were registered at the time of implementation of the 1997 law but which were less than 15 years old.

The likely degree of adherence to this ruling by regional authorities remains unclear. Most observers agree that many local authorities remain unaware of this ruling and are uncertain as to how the 1997 law should be applied. In May 2000, the Russian State Academy of Public Service, in cooperation with local and foreign NGO's, attempted to address this problem by conducting a seminar on religion, which was attended by Ministry of Justice officials from 80 regions.

Between February 12 and June 3, 1998, the Government issued three sets of regulations governing implementation of the new law. While providing procedural guidelines for registration, the regulations failed to clarify many key definitional points in the law.

The case of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) reflects this confusion. The Society was denied federal registration in April 1999 because the Jesuit order's status, which is independent of a local bishop, does not meet requirements contained in the 1997 law's provisions. However, an April 13, 2000 Constitutional Court ruling authorized the Jesuits to be registered. This ruling, published in full on May 13, 2000 in *Rosisskaya Gazeta*, referred extensively to passages in the November 1999 Constitutional Court ruling (which effectively legalized registered organizations existing at the time of the passage of the 1997 law). The April 2000 ruling also specifically refuted points cited by the Ministry of Justice as reasons for refusal. By mid-2000 the Society of Jesus was still negotiating certain points of its charter with the Ministry of Justice.

In the case of at least one religion, a federal government agency has been responsible for significant restrictions on the activities of a church. In some areas, foreign Roman Catholic religious workers must return to their home countries every 3 months in order to renew their visas, unlike other foreign workers who may apply for multiple-entry visas or extend their stays.

In addition to ambiguities in the regulations, the considerable time, effort, and legal expense required by the registration process—which involves simultaneous registration at both the federal and local levels—represent major obstacles for a number of confessions. International and well-funded Russian religious organizations, in particular, began the reregistration process soon after publication of the regulations governing reregistration. Russian Pentecostal groups, which have a solid and growing network of churches throughout the country, sought guidance from the Ministry of Justice on reregistration as early as November 1997. One of the larger organizations, the Russian Unified Fellowship of Christians of the Evangelical Faith (which traces its origins back to the early 1900's) reregistered as a centralized religious organization by late March 1998. It since has incorporated many smaller, newer Pentecostal groups within its structure. However, a significant number of smaller congregations remain unaware of how (or in a few cases, may be reluctant) to comply with Russian registration and tax-inspection requirements.

According to a May 2000 report by the Keston Institute, registration of Muslim religious organizations also is proceeding slowly, with only a small percentage of local organizations registered. The delay is largely due to a struggle between the Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in European Russia and Siberia, based in Ufa and led by Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin, and the Moscow-based Russian Council of Muftis, led by Chief Mufti Ravil Gainutdin. The Central Spiritual Directorate informed the Keston Institute that approximately 20 percent of its 2,500 local organizations have been registered. Mufti Gainutdin's organization is registered but did

not have an estimate of how many of its local organizations were registered. Chief Mufti Gainutdin's staff complained that local authorities in some cases were obstructing the registration of local organizations that wished to join Gainutdin's rather than Tadzhuiddin's union, and that those who wished to leave Tadzhuiddin's Spiritual Directorate were being accused of "Wahhabism." In the Russian context, "Wahhabism," the name of a strict branch of Sunni Islam that originated in Saudi Arabia, has become a pejorative term because of persistent allegations that "Wahhabi extremism" is to blame for terrorist attacks linked to Chechnya.

The delay in reregistration was due in part to the slow pace at which the Federal Ministry of Justice has disseminated the regulations and guidelines to local authorities and in part to understaffing both at the Ministry of Justice and at local levels. In many instances, the Ministry of Justice has asked for additional information and has demanded changes in the organizational structure and by-laws of some groups to ensure that they are in conformity with the law. Smaller minority confessions also sometimes feared the registration process, while others started the process late because of the time involved in agreeing internally on how to register their organizations in conformity with the law. Katya Smyslova of the Esther Legal Assistance Center, an NGO that provides information to religious groups, reports that a significant number of congregations are unaware of registration and tax inspection requirements.

Although reliable statistics are unavailable, observers estimated that as of mid-2000 just under half of the 400 of those requiring registration were registered at the federal level. Figures on the number of pending local registrations are also unavailable, but observers estimate that from one-half to two-thirds of the approximately 16,850 organizations required to reregister have not done so. The Institute for Religion and Law estimates that by the end of 2000, as many as one-third of local religious organizations will not be reregistered and therefore will be subject to liquidation.

In 1998 and early 1999, the Government attempted to address mounting concerns that a large number of religious organizations, particularly at the local level, might remain unregistered when the deadline passed at the end of 1999 and become left vulnerable to attempts by local authorities to restrict their activities. In June 1999, the Ministry of Justice recommended to regional directorates of justice that local religious organizations be reregistered. Religious groups reported in 1999 and early 2000 that local registrations began to be processed more easily after the recommendation. On August 2, 1999, a presidential decree was signed that clarified the relationship between the federal Ministry of Justice and the regional directorates of justice, stating that the directorates are "territorial organs of the Ministry." Observers and officials viewed this decree as a means to help bring insubordinate directorates more in compliance with federal policies, but, reflecting the decentralization of power of recent years, it appears to have had little effect.

Due to the Duma's failure to pass the amendment before the law's original deadline expired, between December 31, 1999 and March 26, 2000, approximately 8,400 religious organizations were left exposed to "liquidation" (closure by court order) on grounds of lack of registration. In an effort to forestall closures, which appears to have been largely successful, the Ministry of Justice in December 1999 sent a recommendation to regional authorities that they refrain from initiating legal proceedings to liquidate any organizations.

According to the Keston Institute and local NGO's, a small handful of religious organizations were threatened with liquidation due to lack of registration. In Voronezh, local administration officials filed petitions to liquidate 13 religious organizations on the basis of lack of registration in February, 2000, of which three cases were brought to court. The Institute of Religion and Law alerted the Ministry of Justice, which took prompt action to prevent the closures. Only one organization, a Pentecostal church, was liquidated. Local officials in Voronezh reportedly claimed that they were unaware of the federal Ministry's recommendation and subsequently withdrew petitions to liquidate the 10 remaining organizations. Although the incident alarmed religious freedom activists, in particular because none of the unregistered Russian Orthodox organizations were singled out, it appears that the proposed liquidations would not have harmed all of the denominations in question, because some of the organizations in question appeared to be either inactive or defunct. In Tatarstan the Church of Christ in Kazan was reportedly liquidated in April 2000 for allegedly holding a church conference without the permission of local authorities. The Kostroma regional department of justice was preparing lawsuits in June 2000 to dissolve the Kostroma Christian Center and Grace Church Evangelical Christians for allegedly violating the religion law by using "hypnosis" during their services. The department refused to register the two groups and authorized a committee of experts of the regional administration to evaluate the groups. The actions came after

reports appeared on Kostroma state television accusing Pentecostal groups of using hypnosis during services.

While there were few efforts at liquidation, local authorities resisted the registration efforts of congregations belonging to a number of faiths. Jehovah's Witnesses report a total of 1,000 congregations in Russia, not all of which require registration. In 1998 and 1999, local authorities were refusing to register some local organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses, pending federal level registration and the resolution of a Moscow municipal court case against Jehovah's Witnesses in that city under Article 14 of the 1997 religion law. Jehovah's Witnesses and religious rights activists welcomed the Ministry of Justice's April 30, 1999 decision to reregister Jehovah's Witnesses at the federal level, and Jehovah's Witnesses reported in May 2000 that since the new religion law went into force on October 1, 1997, it has registered a total of 337 local religious organizations in 65 regions of the country. However, as of April 2000, local authorities in 14 regions refused to register local Jehovah's Witnesses organizations, and no Jehovah's Witnesses organizations have been registered in St. Petersburg, although there are some 7,000 members of Jehovah's Witnesses there, according to the group's representatives. As of May 2000, the Moscow directorate of justice refused registration to Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow eight times, despite the precedent set by the Ministry of Justice's April 30 decision to reregister Jehovah's Witnesses at the federal level. Although there is no legal basis to do so, the directorate may be refusing registration pending resolution of the outstanding civil case against Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow. The civil case against the Jehovah's Witnesses has been adjourned for over 1 year, following a March 1999 municipal ruling to refer the case to an expert panel for a recommendation. In the absence of reregistration, the group is subject to liquidation by court order after December 31, 2000. Moreover, according to representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses, as of May 31, 2000, there were liquidation warnings and actions to ban Jehovah's Witnesses at various levels of the judicial system in Novokuznetsk, Pechora (Komi), Prokhladnyi (Kabardino-Balkaria), Saratov, and Ushaly (Bashkortostan). An appellate court in Lipetsk ruled in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses after the group's registration was denied, and Jehovah's Witnesses intend to challenge decisions in some of the 14 other regions where congregations have been denied registration.

Jehovah's Witnesses report that their applications for local registration in some regions have been referred to local expert panels, despite a recommendation by the federal Ministry of Justice expert panel which, according to the Ministry of Justice, obviates the need for such review. Local expert studies of Jehovah's Witnesses have stalled registration efforts in Mari-El, Khabardino-Balkaria, Novgorod, and Orel. In Lipetsk a local expert study recommended the registration be refused, but in April 2000 the Lipetsk regional court ordered the Lipetsk justice department to register Jehovah's Witnesses under their standard nationwide charter.

Keston reported in March 2000 that Voronezh officials refused to register the Community of All Saints of the True Orthodox Church, an Orthodox Christian congregation that left the Moscow Russian Orthodox Patriarchate in the early 1990's. Parish priest Valeriy Kravets said that Orthodox communities outside the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate that met secretly in the apartments of members and hid successfully from the KGB during the Soviet era, now are finding it nearly impossible to register.

The Unification Church had 15 local organizations registered under the old law. By mid-2000, three organizations, including organizations in Ul'yanovsk and Ufa, had reregistered under the new law and the efforts of four others, in Yakutsk, Samara, Yekaterinburg, and Perm, were rejected. The efforts of the Central Unification Church to register as a centralized religious organization have been denied 3 times for various reasons.

The Salvation Army has registered local organizations in St. Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don, and Volgograd, and currently is seeking federal registration as a centralized religious organization.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) has registered successfully 20 local religious organizations. After some initial trouble concerning registration of missionaries residing in the cities of Tolyatti and Novokuybyshevsk in the Samara region, by November 1999 the Church was able to agree with the Samara directorate of justice to establish registered local organizations in these cities in order to allow Mormon missionaries to reside there legally.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints since mid-1998 has been attempting to register its organizations in Kazan, Tatarstan as a local religious organization. After an earlier rejection, the court responded to a second appeal by transferring the case to a so-called "religious expertise assessment" in accordance with the Tatarstan law on religion. The assessment was supposed to have been completed by January 2000, but was not completed by mid-2000. Lack of registration has made



it difficult for American missionaries, who would be sponsored by the local religious organization, to register their visas in Kazan. The local visa office refuses to register them as sponsored by an organization, but has told them that if individuals sponsor them, they can register. Despite these difficulties, the church has managed to rent space.

Registration problems persist in several regions. For example, the Moscow directorate of justice, reportedly on legally questionable grounds, repeatedly has refused registration of at least five religious organizations, besides Jehovah's Witnesses, including the Salvation Army and the Church of Scientology. The Salvation Army has a lawsuit pending against the Moscow department of justice but has had great difficulty getting a hearing because the municipal court repeatedly attempted to dodge jurisdiction over the case. The Salvation Army eventually was forced to obtain a ruling from a higher court, assigning jurisdiction back to the original municipal court.

The directorate of justice in Chelyabinsk continues to reject the local registration application of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, based on the alleged incompatibility of church activities with federal law. Even without registration, the church continues to hold regular services without incident, although its missionaries have suspended their door-to-door canvassing and other outreach activities. The Chelyabinsk directorate of justice also has rejected the registration applications of Baptist, Adventist, and Pentecostal churches in Chelyabinsk on similar grounds. As of May 2000, Jehovah's Witnesses reported that the Chelyabinsk directorate of justice had refused the group's application for registration seven times.

Measures have been taken to restrict the activities of a number of foreign missionaries and of congregations associated with them. There were reports that four U.S. missionaries are being refused visas to return to Russia. Dan Pollard (formerly of the Vanino Baptist Church in the Khabarovsk region) currently is banned from receiving a visa based on allegations that he violated customs regulations and evaded property taxes; however, it appears that local authorities violated their own regulations and refused to take necessary actions (such as providing a timely tax assessment), which would have enabled Pollard to comply with the law. David Binkley of the Church of Christ in Magadan also faced a criminal charge for failing to report \$8,000 to customs officials, reportedly because he feared that the money would be stolen. He was acquitted in December 1999, primarily because the investigation and prosecution were marred by serious violations of due process by local authorities. Local authorities then defied a court ruling to return the money, returning it briefly only to confiscate it a few minutes later, citing administrative customs regulations not applicable to the case. The third case, regarding Charles Landreth of the Church of Christ in Volgograd, appears to have been a response to articles in the local press accusing Landreth of being a spy. Those allegations may have led local authorities to recommend to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a visa be refused. A member of the local congregation, who has sought to resolve the matter since January 2000, reported in May that since local authorities no longer object to Landreth's return, it appears to be federal authorities who still are refusing to authorize issuance of a visa. A fourth missionary, Monty Race of Evangelical Free Church of America, who entered the country legally with a visa sponsored by a Moscow congregation, has been refused registration to reside in Naberezhniy Chelny, Tatarstan. Race, who is married to a Russian citizen, also has been refused permission to register as a resident foreign spouse of a Russian citizen. The letter of refusal he received from the Ministry of Internal Affairs' local passport control office cited "national security" concerns.

Since March 1998, the Vanino Baptist Church and Pollard have fought a legal battle over registration of the church so that it could sponsor Pollard or a replacement to remain in the country. Khabarovsk authorities continue to deny reregistration of the Vanino Baptist Church on extremely questionable legal grounds. This not only prevents the Vanino Baptist Church from sponsoring a visa for any foreign religious worker but also is likely to leave it subject to liquidation at the end of 2000. The most recent reason for refusal offered by a local justice official is that the church building must be reclassified from a residential to a nonresidential property before the church may use it as a juridical address. However, this official did not cite a specific local statute, and federal law does not prohibit using a residence for religious services.

Although it may be a slow and costly process for religious groups, the judicial system has provided an appeal process for religious organizations threatened with loss of registered status or "liquidation" as a religious organization under Article 14 of the 1997 religion law, expired registration, or other laws. Some local churches that were initially denied local registration have been registered following successful lawsuits, as in the case of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Khakasiya in November 1998, when the federal Supreme Court overturned the verdict of the Khakasiya su-

preme court. A few congregations also reported that local authorities that initially refused to register them relented after the churches said that they would take the matter to court. In May 1999, a Magadan municipal court dismissed for lack of evidence a local procurator's civil case against the Word of Life Pentecostal Church in the Far Eastern city of Magadan under Article 14 of the 1997 religion law, in which the Church was accused of using "cult" practices to manipulate its members. The Magadan oblast court upheld this decision in June 1999. The Church reports that investigation of the church on criminal and tax-related charges continues. Church representatives report that negative stories about them continue to appear in the local state-controlled press. Despite these difficulties, the Word of Life Pentecostal church continues its normal activities.

According to the Keston News Service and to the Slavic Law and Justice Center's Vladimir Ryakhovskiy, a Kirov municipal court on February 1, 2000 dismissed the petition of the Kirov department of justice to close the Kirov Christian Church, a member organization of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christian Pentecostals. Local justice officials alleged that the Church used mass hypnosis to manipulate its followers and presented videotaped "evidence." Church lawyer Ryakhovskiy and a public prosecutor both successfully argued in court that the videotape, secretly filmed without the consent of the church, violated the congregation's right to privacy and could not be presented as legal evidence.

The department of justice in Cheboksary, Chuvashiya, petitioned for liquidation of the Cheboksary Church of Christ. Officials accused the Church of violating a health protection law by praying for the sick, violating civil law by conducting services in the pastor's apartment, failing to register by the original December 31, 1999 deadline of the 1997 religion law, and involving minors in church activity without their parents' consent. In a January 20, 2000 hearing, Anatoliy Pchelintsev of the Institute of Religion and Law and Vladimir Ryakhovskiy of the Slavic Center for Law and Justice argued that these charges had no legal merit, as prayer is not a medical activity and religious services in residential apartments are not forbidden by law. Furthermore the children simply had watched videos of "Superbook," a children's program about the Bible that already had been broadcast in Russia for 2 years by government-controlled television. Nevertheless, the judge postponed the case for another hearing.

At mid-June 2000, Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow were continuing their effort to avoid legal "liquidation." Acting on a complaint from the Committee to Save Youth from Totalitarian Cults (a group allegedly linked to the Russian Orthodox Church), a Moscow municipal procurator is seeking "liquidation" of the Moscow Jehovah's Witnesses organization under Article 14 of the 1997 religion law for its alleged anti-social, anti-family character. In March 1999, the trial was suspended pending review of the case by a panel of court-appointed religious experts. On June 28, 1999, the Moscow city court upheld the decision of the Golovinskiy municipal court to appoint an expert panel. As of mid-2000, the expert panel still was reviewing the case and was expected to render a split recommendation. Meanwhile Jehovah's Witnesses are preparing an appeal to the Supreme Court.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, the St. Petersburg case in which Nataliya Ilyina, the mother of a young mentally disabled woman, had brought suit against Jehovah's Witnesses, alleging that they psychologically damaged her daughter, Yekaterina Ilyina, remained unresolved. Jehovah's Witnesses lawyer Artur Leontyev claimed that the anti-cult group Committee for Family and Personality and also self-described "sectomania" expert and Moscow psychiatrist Fedor Kondratyev are responsible for the case being brought. An earlier court had ruled that the Church had not harmed Ilyina, whose mental disability existed well before she began attending services. The plaintiff requested a second study by experts, which was underway at mid-2000.

There are continuing reports that some local and municipal governments prevented religious groups from using venues such as cinemas that are suitable for large gatherings. In many areas of the country, government-owned facilities are the only available venues. As a result, in some instances, denominations that do not own property effectively have been denied the opportunity to practice their faith in large groups. For example, in August 1999, Jehovah's Witnesses nearly were forced to cancel a convention for 15,000 members of the group at Moscow's Olympic Stadium, reportedly because stadium management was under pressure from the Moscow city administration. The weekend convention also was disrupted briefly by a telephone bomb threat, but no device was found (see Section II).

According to representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses, as of spring 2000 four cases were being litigated in which police officers interrupted meetings or public preaching by Jehovah's Witnesses, including an April 16, 2000 incident in which police in Chelyabinsk broke up a small religious meeting of the sign-language congregation

of Jehovah's Witnesses. The other cases occurred in St. Petersburg, Lensk, and Kislovodsk.

Some congregations also have reported difficulty obtaining necessary permits to renovate facilities and that local property owners were pressured by local officials to cancel leases signed with nontraditional religious churches. Although it remains a legally registered organization, Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow continue to have trouble leasing assembly space and obtaining the necessary permits to renovate their main building. Other religions, including Protestant groups and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, report that they continue to face discrimination in their ability to rent premises and conduct group activities. For example, in April in Kursk, the mayor refused Baptists and Muslims land and permission to build in the city.

Disputes concerning the return of religious property confiscated by the Soviet government are some of the most frequent complaints cited by religious groups. For the most part, synagogues, churches, and mosques have been returned to communities to be used for religious services. The Federal Government has met the requirements of the 1993 presidential decree on communal property restitution, and the decree continues to guide the ongoing process. According to statistics from the Ministry of State Property, over 2,000 federally owned properties have been returned to religious communities since 1989. However, jurisdiction in most cases is at the regional level, and there is no centralized source of information on these cases. A Ministry of Culture official responsible for restitution of religious historical monuments estimated in early 1999 that over 3,600 transfers of religious buildings had occurred at the regional level and that approximately 30 percent of property designated for return had been transferred back to its original owners at both the federal and regional levels. Nonetheless there continue to be reports of religious property that has not been returned. For example, the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Ryazan still has not been returned to the local Catholic community. The Moscow Patriarchate has claimed and taken possession of properties owned by other branches of Orthodoxy and, in certain cases, property of other religions. In some property disputes, religious buildings have been "privatized," and there are long delays in finding new locations for the current occupants, as required by law. Local authorities often refuse to get involved in property disputes, which they contend are between private organizations. Even where state or municipal authorities still have undisputed control of properties, a number of religious communities continue to meet significant obstacles when they request the return of religious buildings. The Jewish community, which has met with some success on communal property restitution, faces the same obstacles as other religious communities and has concerns about the return of Torah scrolls, many of which are in state museum collections. The federal Government turned over 61 Torah scrolls to the Jewish community in May 2000.

Land problems are handled similarly when some religious communities seek to acquire land and necessary building permits for new religious structures. For example, since February 1999 local authorities in Omsk have not responded to the Mormons' request to lease land, although local church leaders are continuing their efforts to locate a site. Some Protestant faiths have suggested that the Russian Orthodox Church influences the Government regarding land allocated for churches of other faiths.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Reports of harassment and punishment for religious belief or activity continue. Mormon missionaries throughout the country frequently are detained for brief periods or asked by local police to cease their activities, regardless of whether they were actually in violation of local statutes on picketing. The Word of Life Pentecostal church in Magadan continues to allege that members have been harassed and followed by persons suspected of being local agents of the Federal Security Service (FSB). An unregistered local Baptist congregation in the village of Chernyshevskiy in Sakha-Yakutiya complained that local authorities were harassing it. Church members reported that on May 5, 2000, local police officers and a fire safety inspector raided the apartment where the Church meets and gathered lists of church members. After the Church's pastor protested, he reportedly was brought to the police station for questioning. The local chief confirmed that police officers did visit the apartment as part of a fire-safety investigation but denied that there was any "incident" with church members. He believes the group is illegal because it has not registered (the congregation believes registration leads to unacceptable interference in church affairs), although the religion law does not require all groups to register officially. The group has been harassed before; in June 1999, local Chernyshevskiy

police broke up a street-evangelism meeting, confiscated a tent, and detained three Baptists.

Catholic parishioners in Moscow have complained of excessive document checks by authorities, including a document check of attendees at a Sunday Mass. Catholic organizations have complained of excessive attention from authorities including the fire inspector and the Ministry of Interior. In June 2000, police in Tura in central Siberia threatened to arrest local Baptists if they continued to distribute free religious material outside of their place of worship. According to the local police chief, it is a crime for the group to distribute religious material because it is not a registered religious organization and such material may not be distributed outside of places of worship. While the Baptists were distributing Bibles and other religious material, Russian Orthodox parishioners and a local Orthodox priest protested and threatened to call the police. Later the police summoned the Baptists to the police station for questioning.

Human rights activists have claimed in the past that only 15 percent of actual violations of religious freedom are reported, and it still appears that only a small percentage of actual incidents are reported to authorities or independent media. According to various sources, the majority of citizens, especially those living in the regions, are still skeptical about the protection of religious freedom and are reluctant to assert their rights due to fear of retaliation. Federal authorities did not take sufficient action to reverse discriminatory actions taken at the local level or to discipline those officials responsible. Federal authorities and Moscow human rights activists often have limited information about what is happening in the regions.

Some churches and NGO's are taking steps to teach church members how to assert their rights. For example, the Church of Scientology reported that its Russian members initially accepted without protest verbal harassment and intimidating inquiries by local residents and police. The Church subsequently educated its members on their rights under the law and worked to establish cooperative relations with local police officers, which led to a decrease in harassment.

In May 1999, assisted by religion law experts Anatoliy Pchelintsev and Vladimir Ryakhosvkiy, former judge Galina Pitkevich filed a case with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), claiming that her right to fair trial and her rights to freedom of thought and of expression under the European Convention on Human Rights had been violated. Pitkevich, a member of the charismatic church Living Faith, was fired from her job at the Noyabrsk city court of Yamalo-Nenets autonomous region, based on accusations that she used her position to attract new members to her faith. Some human rights groups believe the evidence was fabricated. The ECHR determined that she has not yet exhausted all legal remedies in Russia (a fundamental requirement for an ECHR ruling), but her lawyers are appealing the decision. Pitkevich, now a private lawyer, reportedly faces discrimination from former colleagues.

The case of Nataliya Nikishchina, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses who lost custody of her son, allegedly based on religious discrimination, was returned in 1999 to Russian courts by the ECHR. In this case, Russia's Supreme Court overturned all previous rulings and ordered the case be heard again in a new court.

Lengthy investigations continue regarding a number of so-called "nontraditional" denominations. The Church of Scientology continued to experience registration problems. Originally registered in 1994, the Moscow Church of Scientology has applied 3 times for reregistration under the 1997 law, only to have the applications denied. As of mid-2000, the Church was applying a fourth time. The Moscow general procurator and approximately 70 individuals representing members of the FSB, Federal Tax Police, the local police, and other law enforcement organizations in April 1999 conducted a high-profile, 3-day raid on the Hubbard Humanitarian Center, which is affiliated with the Moscow Church of Scientology. This was the second such raid. It was undertaken in connection with charges by the Procurcacy that the Center was engaging in commercial enterprise without a license and had failed to pay taxes. Although the Center successfully reregistered as a social organization in 1997 in accordance with legal requirements that such organizations reregister by July 1, 1999, a Moscow court subsequently invalidated the reregistration and ordered the Center to be liquidated, a verdict upheld by a higher court. However, by mid-2000 this had not taken place and the center continued to operate as a registered social organization. A separate case based on similar charges was initiated against the Center's director, Gennadiy Kudinov, who is also head of the Church. As of mid-2000, the courts had not determined which Moscow judge should have jurisdiction over the case. While court rulings were based on the law on social organizations, church officials believe that the ruling is part of a broader attack on the Church and its activities. The Magadan Word of Life Pentecostal Church reports that it still is being investigated on criminal and tax-related charges. The Church of Krishna

Conscious, which has experienced rapid growth in recent years and is registered at the federal level, encountered difficulties in some regions, particularly in Krasnodar and other southern regions, as well in the Moscow region, where the authorities repeatedly have denied it permission to acquire land and the building permits for construction of a temple. Its activities are strongly opposed by elements of the Russian Orthodox Church.

There have been instances of the serious misuse of psychiatry by local officials reminiscent of Soviet-era abuses. The Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia, along with several human rights organizations, has criticized the use of psychiatry in "deprogramming" victims of "totalitarian sects." In such cases, authorities use pseudo-psychological and spiritual techniques to "treat" persons who have been members of new religious groups.

St. Petersburg authorities arbitrarily detained six Scientologists for psychiatric evaluation. In January in St. Petersburg, Vladimir Tretyak, leader of Sentuar (the local branch of the Church of Scientology), was accused by St. Petersburg chief psychiatrist Larisa Rubina of inflicting psychological damage on his coreligionists. On June 17, six members of Sentuar—Mikhail Dvorkin, Igor Zakrayev, Irina Shamarina, Svetlana Kruglova, Svetlana Pastushenkova, and Lyudmila Urzhumtseva—were hospitalized forcibly and underwent 3 weeks of criminal psychiatric investigation by order of Boris Larionov, procurator of the Vyborgskiy district of St. Petersburg. In televised remarks, Rubina reported their July 8 release and declared that the six were mentally competent. Rubina referred to the six as "the accused," despite the fact they were only witnesses in the criminal case against Tretyak.

While they generally have not been inhibited by the authorities in the free practice of their religion, Jews and Muslims continue to encounter prejudice and societal discrimination, and government authorities have been criticized for insufficient action to counter such prejudice (see Section II). Violently anti-Semitic remarks in national venues, such as those made by former Communist Duma Deputy and retired General Albert Makashov in October 1998 and February 1999, have not been repeated. Makashov's remarks, which blamed Jews for the 1998 financial crisis and called for their elimination, caused a public furor, but the Duma's Communists and their allies blocked a November 4, 1998 motion to censure him. Some Jewish groups report that the Communists and a neo-Nazi group, the Russian National Unity (RNE), continue to use anti-Semitism as a political tool to build populist support. However, since the December 1999 Duma elections, the Communist Party's influence and support in the country has somewhat eroded. The RNE, which is active in a few regions, regularly calls for violence against other religious and ethnic groups as well, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims.

Krasnodar region governor Nikolay Kondratenko is well known for making anti-Semitic remarks. The governor's public speeches in the region often contained crude anti-Semitic remarks and stereotypes, and blame Jews and alleged Jewish conspiracies for the country's problems. Although some local residents have downplayed the effect of Kondratenko's open anti-Semitism, it appears that at least some of these persons practice a degree of self-censorship to avoid retaliation by local authorities.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on March 29, 2000, then-President-elect Putin approved an interagency plan to combat extremism and promote religious and ethnic tolerance. Broad in scope, the plan calls for a large number of interagency measures, such as the review of federal and regional legislation regarding extremism, required training for public officials on how to promote ethnic and religious tolerance, and the design of new educational materials for use in public educational institutions. Implementation of the plan, which is to be guided by an interagency commission on combating extremism, has not yet begun. This plan has attracted little public commentary so far. In a March 2000 open letter to members of the U.S. Congress released by the Kremlin press service, President Putin called anti-Semitism "an inadmissible display of aggressive nationalism incompatible with civilized society in Russia."

The federal Government reports that it has moved forward on other promised initiatives against extremism and anti-Semitism. In May 1999, the Moscow city duma adopted a law forbidding the distribution and display of Nazi symbols, and the Moscow regional duma passed similar legislation in June 1999. However, on September 2, 1999, the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* newspaper reported that then-Moscow oblast governor Anatoliy Tyazhlov refused to sign the law, stating that the draft law threatened not only artistic and academic freedom of expression, but also freedom of religion, as swastikas are displayed by some religious groups. Regional duma members are working to redraft the law.

Federal and Dagestani authorities stepped up their pressure on what they label as the republic's "Wahhabi" Muslim community. After an incursion on August 7 by

Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas, Dagestan President Magomedali Magomedov declared that his government would take a harder line against "Wahhabism." In September Dagestan's parliament passed legislation that outlawed "Wahhabi" groups and other organizations it considered extremist. The Keston News Service reports that government and religious officials in several Dagestani districts have wrecked conservative Islamic mosques, suppressed religious broadcasts, and harassed local conservative Islamic communities. According to press reports, federal and Dagestani forces have followed up their initial counterinsurgency efforts with attacks on Muslim villages that they consider to be "Wahhabi" and that refuse to register their religious communities and turn in their weapons.

On February 3, 1999, Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov declared Shari'a (Islamic law) to be in effect in the republic of Chechnya. Maskhadov signed several decrees stipulating that all local legislation be brought into line with the Koran and Shari'a regulations. Maskhadov ordered the Chechen legislature and the Council of Muftis to draft a constitution based on Shari'a within 1 month. The legislature also was stripped of its legislative functions and, on February 10, 1999, was replaced with a 34-member Shura that has responsibility for "consulting" with the republic's president. The Shura includes several prominent opposition leaders. According to one expert, the Shura created in Chechnya is not a traditional Muslim Shura run by religious men, but instead is a council of military men. The Shura is not known to have functioned since the beginning of the federal Government's military campaign in Chechnya in late 1999.

Apart from the 3-week detention and involuntary psychiatric evaluation of six members of the Church of Scientology, there were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between different religious groups are frequently tense, and there continue to be instances of religiously motivated violence.

Many Russians firmly believe that at least nominal adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is at the heart of what it means to be Russian, and Russian Orthodoxy is considered in conservative nationalist circles as the de facto official religion of the country.

There is no large-scale movement to promote inter-faith dialog, although on the local level different religious groups successfully collaborate on charity projects and participate in inter-faith dialog. In addition, the Russian Orthodox Church, and Russian Pentecostal and Baptist organizations also have been reluctant to support ecumenism. Traditionally, the Russian Orthodox Church has pursued inter-faith dialog with other Christians on the international level.

Muslims, who constitute approximately 10 percent of the population, continue to encounter societal discrimination and antagonism in some areas where they are a minority. According to press reports, on October 17, 1999, protesters in Volgograd successfully pressured the World Congress of Tatars to postpone a ceremony to lay a cornerstone for a new mosque. Chief Mufti Ravil Gainutdin reportedly stated that construction would be suspended until an agreement could be reached with local residents.

Over the last 4 years, there were many instances of violence in the north Caucasus, some of which had religious motivations. There was only one new report of violence against non-Muslim religious workers in Chechnya, apparently because very few or no workers remain. However, on August 14, 1999, a deacon of the Grozny Baptist Church was kidnaped and held for ransom in Grozny and another church member was kidnaped earlier that month. The threat of hostage taking, primarily for ransom, continues to be extremely high in the North Caucasus. There were no reports of developments in the case of religious affairs official Abuzar Sumbulatov, who, according to the Keston Institute in Grozny, was kidnaped in 1999. No ransom was demanded, and Sumbulatov, known for his tolerant views on religion, is presumed dead. Kidnapings of Russian Orthodox and Baptist clergy in Chechnya and bordering areas in 1998 and 1999, according to Keston, suggested that Christians were being targeted specifically. The Russian Baptist Union advised its members in 1998 to leave Chechnya.

Following large-scale emigration over the last 2 decades, between 600,000 and 700,000 Jews remain in Russia (0.5 percent of the total population). While Jewish emigration rates are significantly lower than there were during the late Soviet period, the number of Jews leaving Russia for economic reasons and fear of persecution more than doubled in 1999, from 13,019 to 29,534, according to the Russian branch of the Jewish Agency. The vast majority of Jews (80 percent) live in Moscow or St. Petersburg. Jews continue to encounter societal discrimination, and government authorities have been criticized for insufficient action to counter it. However, in August 1999, the Ministry of Press, Television, Radio Broadcasting, and Mass Communications issued a warning to a city-owned television station in St. Petersburg for broadcasting anti-Semitic material in violation of the mass media law's prohibition on inciting racial violence or hatred. That same month, the St. Petersburg Commissioner for Human Rights, Mikhail Chulaki, publicly criticized the program that broadcast the anti-Semitic material.

Anti-Semitic themes continue to figure prominently in hundreds of extremist publications in Krasondar and Samara regions, among others. However, traditionally anti-Semitic publications with a large distribution, such as the newspaper *Zavtra*, while still pursuing anti-Semitic themes, such as portraying Russian Oligarchs as exclusively Jewish, appear to be more careful than in the past about using crude anti-Semitic language. Some Jewish groups believe that the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) uses anti-Semitism as a political tool to build populist support, which is seen by many to be decreasing.

Observers in the country and abroad are assessing whether anti-Semitic rhetoric represents a sustained pattern of intensified anti-Semitism. There were several reports of major crimes or acts of intimidation linked to anti-Semitic groups or motives in the early months of the period covered by this report. However, the number of anti-Semitic incidents reportedly decreased beginning in the fall of 1999. Observers differ as to whether these incidents represent an increase in violence, but human rights proponents agree that anti-Semitism remains a very serious societal problem and that the Government and civil society must continue to build institutions to protect the rights of religious minorities.

On July 13, 1999, Jewish Cultural Center director Leopold Kaymovskiy was wounded severely in a knife attack in his office at the Moscow Choral Synagogue. Kaymovskiy's attacker, 20-year-old Nikita Krivchun, said that he acted alone and that he considered Jews "evil." Krivchun was charged with attempted murder for reasons of national, racial, or religious hatred, and subsequently was declared mentally incompetent and placed in a psychiatric institution. Initial press reports quoted statements by Krivchun implying that he belonged to an anti-Semitic group, but investigators did not uncover evidence of such a connection and made no other arrests. On July 25, 1999, a bomb was found in the Bolshaya Bronnaya Lubavitcher synagogue. The bomb was removed by synagogue workers and later detonated by the FSB, causing some damage to the synagogue. Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov criticized the bombing and attended a July 29, 1999 service at the synagogue. The FSB is investigating the bomb as a terrorist act, but has made no arrests in the case. Vandals desecrated six Jewish graves in Tomsk on August 2, 1999. Also, on August 2, 1999, then-President Yeltsin told visiting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak that the Government would prosecute anti-Semitic crimes and proposed Israeli-Russian cooperation in combating anti-Semitism. No progress was reported in investigations of two May 1999 bombings near the Moscow Choral Synagogue, the May 1998 bombing of the Marina Roshcha Synagogue in Moscow, the vandalism of synagogues in Novosibirsk and in Birobidjan in early 1999, or the May 1998 desecration of 149 Jewish graves in Irkutsk. There was a more positive outcome to the June 5, 2000 incident in which some 40 gravestones in the Jewish part of a cemetery in Nizhnii Novgorod were destroyed. The teenage vandals were quickly captured by local police, and they and their parents were required to work with their children to help clean up the cemetery.

The ultranationalist and anti-Semitic Russian National Unity (RNE) paramilitary organization, led by Aleksandr Barkashov, claims to have extended its presence beyond its southern Russian stronghold since 1998. However, the party has remained a fairly marginal political force in regional and national politics. Although reliable figures on its membership are not available, in what is most likely an exaggeration, the RNE claims a membership of 50,000 persons in 24 federation chapters. At least one RNE member has been elected to a local administration (in Saratov) and, according to press accounts, the RNE has representatives in regional governments in Kostroma and Vladimir, Tver and Samara oblasts provide resources for RNE youth groups, and, in Voronezh, RNE members patrol the streets with local militias. According to press sources, these joint street patrols failed in Kostroma and Yekaterinburg, where RNE members turned them into opportunities for petty crime,

causing local authorities to cancel the programs. RNE “uniformed” members were visible in 1999 at political and cultural public gatherings, but their day-to-day visibility on the streets and in public areas of Moscow has not been obvious since a march in January 1999.

The increased visibility of the RNE and other extremists across the country prompted government efforts to address the problem of extremism more forcefully in 1998 and 1999. Moscow authorities banned the RNE from convening a congress in December 1998, citing the RNE’s lack of credentials as a legally registered public organization at the time. (The Ministry of Justice twice denied the RNE’s registration.) The RNE subsequently managed to register, but then was stripped of its registration by a Moscow court in April 1999. However, some observers called the municipal prosecutor’s case weak and motivated only by the desire of city authorities to ban the organization. Although an interagency plan to combat extremism and promote tolerance was signed by President Putin on March 29, 2000, many elements of the plan need further definition, and implementation of most of its concrete measures has yet to begin. Its potential impact cannot yet be gauged.

Krasnodar region governor Kondratenko regularly engages in anti-Semitic remarks (see Section I). A report issued in October 1997 by the human rights group Memorial criticized Krasnodar government officials for “encouraging radical nationalist groups,” including the Cossacks, and “indirectly inciting them to violence” against ethnic minority groups in the area. Local government authorities have sanctioned patrols by Cossack paramilitary groups in the name of law enforcement. Such groups are not publicly accountable, and their activities have resulted in human rights abuses.

After his 1996 election, Kondratenko appointed Cossack “hetman” Vladimir Gromov as deputy governor of the region. In April 1997, Kondratenko and Gromov issued a resolution making Cossack groups subordinate to the regional rather than the federal Government, according to the Center for Human Rights Advocacy. According to media reports of statements by radical Cossack chieftain Ivan Bezguly, he has 44,000 Cossacks at his disposal ostensibly to enforce “law and order.” Estimates of the total number of Cossacks in Krasnodar are as high as 300,000. The Cossacks’ tactics appear designed to brutalize and intimidate the area’s ethnic minorities and to bring about the group’s stated goal of cleansing the area of all non-Slavic Russians. A 1999 joint report by anti-fascist Youth Action, the Union of Societies of Soviet Jews, and the Moscow Helsinki Group states that Cossacks closely monitor local officials to ensure loyalty to Kondratenko. The extent or effectiveness of federal investigations of racial or ethnic provocations in Krasnodar is unknown. Nonetheless, the effect of Putin’s regional reforms on such regions remains to be seen.

Despite legal registration, members of some religions, including some Protestant groups, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, continued to face discrimination in their ability to rent premises and conduct group activities (see Section I).

Occasionally opposition to the activities of religious groups came from other religious groups. For example, in July 1999, the Russian Orthodox Church diocese in Vladivostok asked the Primorskiy Kray prosecutor to examine the activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and an offshoot group of Hare Krishnas. The diocese reportedly argued that the three groups were violating the religion law by using deceptive methods to recruit converts. Leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church also have criticized publicly the Catholic Church for proselytizing in regions where residents have been traditionally Orthodox. Russian Orthodox Patriarch Aleksii II charged in June 2000 that the Catholic Church was attempting to expand its influence into Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. From time to time, the Russian Orthodox Church has criticized the press for what it called “antichurch publications,” but stopped short of imposing any church sanctions against particular authors or editors. However, the Church appealed to authors of what it considered inaccurate accounts of church history to “realize the sinfulness of their evil deeds.” Religious groups frequently complain of biased accounts in local press outlets. While the overall scope of the problem is difficult to gauge, both regional and national newspapers have published sensational, biased, or libelous articles criticizing non-traditional religions, such as the Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals, the Church of Christ, and the Church of Scientology. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, a local Chelyabinsk television station broadcast prime time news reports in late 1999, accusing Jehovah’s Witnesses of being an illegal organization of mentally ill persons who abuse children and possess nuclear and chemical weapons. Jehovah’s Witnesses filed a libel suit, which was under way as of mid-2000. The defendants rejected an out-of-court settlement that would have permitted Jehovah’s Witnesses



a televised response to the programs. The court itself rejected a similar request by Jehovah's Witnesses.

As foreign or so-called nontraditional religions in the country continue to grow, many Russians, influenced by negative reports in the mass media and public criticism by Russian Orthodox Church officials and other influential figures, continue to exhibit hostility toward these "foreign sects." These sentiments apparently sparked occasional harassment and even physical attacks. For example, according to press reports, in August 1999, between 10 and 15 youths burst into a Moscow Hare Krishna temple, beat followers, and inflicted a severe head laceration on 1 person that require hospitalization. Mormons and Pentecostals have reported instances in which they may have been followed, harassed, and, in at least one case, physically struck. For example, on August 21, 1999, an anonymous bomb threat led to the evacuation of 15,000 persons attending a Jehovah's Witnesses convention in Moscow's Olympic Stadium (see Section I). There are believed to be more cases of such harassment than are reported. In several instances during 1999, local press outlets accused Scientologists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses of espionage, brainwashing, and other activities that they believed to be harmful to citizens. A political commentator for the ORT network alleged in a November 1999 broadcast that Moscow mayor Luzhkov is a Scientologist as part of the station's effort to reduce Luzhkov's party's chances in the December 1999 Duma elections.

In an August 1999 conference on spirituality at Moscow State University, Metropolitan Kirill, head of the Patriarchate's public relations department, voiced the view that international human rights standards do not apply to Russia, because they are based on Western standards, which do not take into account Eastern tradition.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Mission has been active in encouraging respect for religious freedom. Throughout the period covered by this report, the Embassy in Moscow and the Consulates General in Yekaterinburg, St. Petersburg, and Vladivostok were active in investigating reports of violations of religious freedom, including anti-Semitic incidents. Working-level U.S. Government officials engage a broad range of government officials, representatives of religious groups, and human rights activists on a daily basis. These contacts include: representatives of over 20 religious confessions; the Institute for Religion and Law; the Slavic Law and Justice Center; the Esther Legal Information Center; lawyers representing religious groups; journalists; academics; former and current government officials; and mainstream human rights activists long known for their commitment to religious freedom, such as Moscow Helsinki Group Chairman Lyudmila Alekseyeva, Father Gleb Yakunin, and former Duma Deputy Valeriy Borshchev.

The Embassy's political section uses a team approach to track religious issues, which involves the human rights officer, the rule-of-law officer, and the civil society officer (all of whose duties include religious affairs). This strategy allows the Embassy to offer a broad range of reporting and provide continuous coverage, even if one of the officers is absent. The Embassy's consular section, officers from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and representatives of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) regularly cooperate with the political section to gather information on religious freedom in the country. Embassy personnel of all sections and agencies travelling to the regions are encouraged to inquire into the local religious-freedom situation. Embassy officials at the chief of mission level discuss religious freedom with high-ranking officials in the Presidential Administration, the Government, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs approximately every 6 weeks, raising specific cases of concern. Federal officials have responded by investigating those cases and keeping embassy staff informed on issues they have raised. The Ambassador publicly criticized the attack on Jewish leader Leopold Kaymovskiy and the attempted bombing of the Bolshaya Bronnaya Synagogue, calling on the Government to investigate these crimes vigorously. Embassy representatives maintained close contact with Jewish leaders throughout the aftermath of these two crises. After the attempted bombing, the Embassy's regional security officer also visited two other Lubavitcher synagogues to advise them on physical security. The Embassy closely followed and reported on the progress of the amendment to the 1997 religion law and related Constitutional Court rulings.

The Embassy and consulates also approach local officials at the working-level on individual religious freedom cases. For example, the Embassy played a role in resolving registration problems of two religious groups in Samara and Tatarstan, and is maintaining contact with Tatarstan authorities in an effort to resolve a third case. The Embassy and consulates also repeatedly have investigated and raised with

federal and local authorities problems experienced by individual missionaries, including the refusal of Russian visas and registrations. As implementation of the 1997 religion law continues, the Embassy maintains semiweekly contact with working-level officials at the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In May 2000, an Embassy official attended a 4-day religion law seminar hosted by the Russian State Academy for Public Service, consulted with Russian and foreign religion law experts on the seminar results, and met with representatives of religious groups at a subsequent briefing organized by the Esther Legal Information Center.

In Washington as well as in Russia, the U.S. Government urges adherence to international standards of religious liberty in the Russian Federation. Officials in the State Department regularly meet with human rights groups and religious organizations concerned about religious tolerance in Russia. The Office of International Religious Freedom, headed by Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Robert Seiple, has met with numerous visiting Russian officials, as well as with delegations representing various Russian religious groups. The 1997 law on religious freedom has been the subject of numerous high-level communications between representatives of the U.S. and Russian Governments, involving the President, the Vice President, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and other senior U.S. officials. For example, at the U.S.-Russia Summit held in Moscow on June 10–11, 2000, President Clinton discussed religious freedom in Russia in his meetings with President Putin and other government officials. On September 14, 1999, Ambassador-at-Large Stephen Sestanovich, Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the New Independent States, co-chaired a roundtable meeting with representatives of religious communities at the State Department, together with Senator Gordon Smith, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Robert Seiple, and National Security Council Senior Director Carlos Pascual. On April 13, 2000, Ambassador Sestanovich co-chaired another roundtable discussion on religious freedom in Russia with Senator Smith, Ambassador Seiple, and NSC Senior Director Mark Medish. On May 22, 2000, in compliance with Section 567 of the fiscal year 2000 Foreign Operations Act, the Acting Secretary of State made a determination that the central authorities in Russia did not implement the law on religion in a manner intended to restrict the religious liberty of minority faiths. However, in the report to Congress that accompanied the Acting Secretary's determination, he noted that some local officials have used the 1997 law to restrict citizens' rights.

## SAN MARINO

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

Although Roman Catholicism is dominant, it is not the state religion, and the law prohibits discrimination based on religion. The Catholic Church receives direct benefits from the State through income tax revenues as taxpayers may request that 0.3 percent of their income tax payments be allocated to the Catholic Church or to "other" charities, including two religions (the Waldesian Church and Jehovah's Witnesses).

In 1993 recently elected parliamentarians objected to the traditional 1909 oath of loyalty to the "Holy Gospels." Although they eventually swore as required, the parliamentarians contended that it violated Article 9 of the European Convention and brought suit in the European Court of Human Rights. Following this objection, Parliament changed the law in 1993 to permit a choice between the traditional oath and one in which the reference to the Gospels was replaced by "on my honor." On February 18, 1999, the European Court found the requirement that Members of Parliament swear their loyalty to the "Holy Gospels" violated religious freedom. However, its ruling also implicitly endorsed the revised 1993 legal formulation. The

Court also noted that the traditional ("Holy Gospels") oath is still mandatory for other offices, such as the Captain Regent or a member of the Government; however, to date, no elected Captain Regent or government member has challenged the validity of the 1909 oath.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country does not provide statistics on the size of religious groups and there is no recent census data providing information on religious membership; however, it is estimated that over 95 percent of the population are Catholic. There are also small groups of Jehovah's Witnesses and adherents to the Baha'i Faith (who organize small, active missionary groups), some Muslims, and members of the Waldesian Church.

There are no private religious schools; the school system is public and is financed by the State. Public schools provide Catholic religious instruction; however, students may choose without penalty not to participate.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist between the religious communities, and government and religious officials encourage mutual respect for differences.

Roman Catholicism is not a state religion but it is dominant in society, as most citizens were born and raised under Catholic principles that form part of their culture. These principles still permeate state institutions symbolically; for example, crucifixes may be found hanging on courtroom or government office walls. They also affect societal lifestyles independently of individual compliance with Catholic precepts (such as strictures on divorce).

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Consulate General in Florence discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## SERBIA-MONTENEGRO

Federal and republic law provide for freedom of religion; however, in practice both the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the constituent Republic of Serbia and their legal systems provide little protection for the religious rights of minority groups. The Republic of Montenegro, in contrast, does attempt to ensure and protect religious rights. In Kosovo the withdrawal of Serbian forces and establishment of the U.N. Interim Administration Mission (UNMIK), resulted in an improved situation for the largely Muslim ethnic Albanian population that was a victim of the massive human rights abuses committed by FRY forces in 1999. However, retributions against the minority Serbs have continued. UNMIK has worked since June 1999 to secure peace and foster respect for human rights regardless of ethnicity or religion.

There was no change in the overall status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report in those areas subject to the Serbian Government's control.

Religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in Serbia-Montenegro, and it is often difficult to clearly identify discriminatory acts as primarily religious in origin rather than ethnic. However, views on ethnic groups in the region historically have been strongly influenced by religion, and most instances of ethnic discrimination have at least some religious roots.

Both the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) Government and Government of Serbia continued to suppress ethnic and religious minorities, using intolerance as a tool to maintain FRY President Slobodan Milosevic's grip on power. Both Governments provided preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church, and societal discrimination against minorities remained widespread throughout areas of the FRY under the Serbian Government's control. In Kosovo where the effects of the regime's

ethnic cleansing campaign linger, societal tensions were particularly noticeable. In Montenegro tensions between the unofficial Montenegrin Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church worsened and were politicized by opposing political factions, despite the Montenegrin Government's attempts to moderate the situation.

The U.S. Government seeks to promote ethnic and religious tolerance in the FRY through public admonitions, support of the U.N. Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, support for the democratic opposition in Serbia, and support of the reform-oriented government of Montenegro.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The law in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as in the constituent republics of Serbia and Montenegro, provides for freedom of religion; however, in practice, the Government and the legal system provide very little protection for the religious rights of minority groups in those areas under the Serbian Government's administration. There is no state religion, but the regime of President Milosevic gives preferential treatment, including access to state-run television for major religious events, to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

In Montenegro, the Constitution specifically recognizes the existence of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but not other faiths. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church was autocephalous when Montenegro was an independent principality. However, when Montenegro became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes after the First World War, the Montenegrin Orthodox Church lost its independence and became part of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The re-established Montenegrin Orthodox Church is registered with the Government of Montenegro Ministry of Interior in Cetinje, the former capital, as a nongovernmental organization (NGO). The Government of Montenegro has been careful to remain neutral in the dispute between followers of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Montenegrin Orthodox Church, but political parties have used this issue in pursuit of their own agendas. Pro-Serbian parties strongly support moves for the establishment of an official state religion, while pro-independence parties have pushed for the official recognition of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

##### *Religious Demography*

The predominant faith in the FRY, outside of Kosovo, is Serbian Orthodoxy, although religion is not a significant factor in public life. Serbs, who are predominantly Serbian Orthodox if they follow any religion, make up approximately 65 percent of the population. Montenegrins, who constitute about 6 percent of the total population and live mainly in Montenegro, also primarily follow Serbian Orthodoxy. The Muslim population, composed mostly of Slavic Muslims who live predominantly in the Sandzak region bordering Serbia and Montenegro, and ethnic Albanians located primarily in Kosovo, constitutes about 19 percent of the total population. Like Serbs and Montenegrins, many FRY Muslims are not in fact religious, and "Muslim" is often more a form of ethnic identity than of belief. About 4 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, and consist of ethnic Hungarians, who live primarily in Vojvodina, ethnic Albanians, and Croats who live in Vojvodina and scattered communities in Montenegro. About 1 percent of the population is Protestant. Other minority religious groups make up another 12 percent of the population.

##### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Serbian Government made no progress in the restitution of property that belonged to the Jewish community prior to World War II, despite President Milosevic's past promises to resolve the disputes. The Orthodox and Catholic Churches have had similar difficulties with the restitution of their property confiscated by the Communist regime (1944-89).

When it suits its political aims, the Milosevic regime does not hesitate to attack verbally the Serbian Orthodox Church, which was more outspoken in its criticism of the regime during the period covered by this report. The Church called openly for Milosevic to step down in 1999 as a result of his campaign of ethnic cleansing.

There was no change in the overall status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report in those areas subject to the Serbian Government's control.

##### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Since 1992 the Milosevic regime has attempted to suppress all of its enemies in the FRY, Serb and non-Serb alike. To achieve his primary political aim of continued rule of Serbia, Milosevic has exploited ethnic, religious, and political divisions through his control of the media and the organs of state security. The focus of this

suppression has been primarily along ethnic lines, and in general encompasses religion only as a component of ethnicity.

Prior to their expulsion from Kosovo in June 1999, Serbian Interior Ministry troops, police, and paramilitary formations committed widespread and severe abuses against Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population. The regime attempted to rid the province of almost its entire ethnic Albanian population, killing thousands of ethnic Albanians and forcing nearly one million to become refugees. This ethnic cleansing was distinct from religiously motivated violence; however, because most Kosovar Albanians are Muslim, the Serbian campaign also resulted in deliberate destruction of mosques and other Islamic landmarks.

For similar reasons, during the period of this report, police repression continued against ethnic and religious minorities elsewhere in Serbia. Repression was reported against Muslims in the Sandzak region along the border between Serbia and Montenegro. Reports of harassment in the Sandzak region indicated that it was carried out mostly by federal Yugoslav army troops.

Serbian police often selectively applied certain laws only against minorities and used force with relative impunity. In the Sandzak region, Serb authorities harassed the Slavic Muslim minority. Police use of arbitrary arrest and detention continued in the region.

In Kosovo the withdrawal of Serbian troops and establishment of UNMIK resulted in an improved situation for the majority, largely Muslim ethnic Albanian population. One of the most serious challenges facing the international community in its administration of Kosovo has been to ensure the protection of the minority Serbian community from retribution by the Albanian community for the abuses they suffered at the hands of Serbian forces.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religion and ethnicity in the FRY are so closely intertwined as to be inseparable. Increased societal violence against the Catholic minority in Vojvodina, largely consisting of ethnic Hungarians and Croats, also was reported. In addition, Catholic churches frequented by the Croat minority were attacked, although there have been few reports of this type of activity during the period covered by this report.

Ethnic and religious minorities in Kosovo, the Sandzak region, and Vojvodina face discrimination in housing and employment. In Kosovo, ethnic Serbs have experienced societal discrimination since the expulsion of FRY security forces. Slavic Muslims in Sandzak face severe discrimination in health care, commerce, and education. There were credible reports that ethnic Albanians and Muslims in Serbia continued to be driven from their homes or fired from their jobs on the basis of religion or ethnicity. Other ethnic minorities, including ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina who are predominantly Catholic (if religious), also allege discrimination. However, these forms of discrimination are primarily based on ethnicity rather than religion.

In light of societal violence in Kosovo against properties owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian Orthodox religious symbols, UNMIK authorities took extra steps following the Kosovo conflict to protect religious sites and to ensure that members of all religious groups could worship safely. Kosovo Force (KFOR) deployed security contingents at religious sites throughout the province to protect them from further destruction, as had occurred immediately after KFOR's intervention in June 1999.

However, reflecting the severity of security concerns, Bishop Artemije, head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, declared soon after KFOR entered the province in June 1999, that the city of Prizren was no longer safe and announced that he, 9 priests, and 200 Serb civilians would leave for Pristina. Approximately 60 Serb families from Pristina already had taken refuge with Artemije in a monastery outside the city.

As of December 1999, Bishop Artemije reported that more than 80 Orthodox churches had been destroyed, damaged, or desecrated. Serbian Orthodox priests also were intimidated by Albanian Kosovars, with reports of attacks on priests accused in the Albanian press of collaborating with Serb forces. However, targeting of Orthodox churches and priests was based primarily on ethnic rather than religious grounds.

The small Albanian Roman Catholic community, largely centered in the southern and western part of Kosovo, complained during the summer of 1999 that Kosovo

Liberation Army (KLA) members or others acting in the name of the KLA harassed Catholics and hindered religious activities on the pretext that Catholics collaborated with the Serbs during the conflict.

Although there were few reported instances of abuses based on religion in the Republic of Montenegro, there were numerous acts of societal violence against ethnic minorities in Serbia, especially in the Sandzak region and Vojvodina. Serbs primarily have shown intolerance toward predominantly Muslim ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and toward the Slavic Muslims in the region of Sandzak. These abuses stem both from religious intolerance and ethnic prejudice.

In Montenegro, relations between religious communities are generally peaceful. Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox communities coexist within the same communities and often use the same municipally owned properties to conduct worship services. However, during the period covered by this report, there was a rise in tensions between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the self-proclaimed Montenegrin Orthodox Church. There were several incidents of violence between the supporters of these two competing Orthodox churches. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church has claimed holdings of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The Serbian Orthodox Church remains the most significant faith in Montenegro and has rejected the property claims.

Violence is alleged to have broken out between members of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church and of the Serbian Orthodox Church in late 1999 when on November 21 Father Dragan Stanisis of the Serbian Orthodox Church reportedly hit Montenegrin Orthodox Metropolitan Mihajlo in the face during a confrontation on a road near Cetinje. According to press reports, Father Stanisis's followers then attacked Metropolitan Mihajlo's car, although Stanisis denies that the incident ever occurred. Approximately 250 persons demonstrated to protest the incident in Cetinje, and authorities summoned riot police and reinforcements to prevent further incidents.

The rift between the churches was highlighted again in January 2000 when a Serbian Orthodox priest delayed the traditional Christmas celebration by calling on the audience to leave the hall because Montenegrin Orthodox Metropolitan Mihailo was present. Police reportedly had prevented a parallel Montenegrin Orthodox celebration from taking place in a separate location in the town on the same day. The Serbian Orthodox Church then publicly protested the Government's tolerance of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are officially registered religions in Montenegro. However, their followers report that their efforts to build and renovate churches have been impaired by persons they believe to be loyal to the local Serbian Orthodox Church.

The Jewish population in the FRY has also expressed concern about ultra-nationalist political figures and their anti-Semitic rhetoric.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has sought to promote ethnic and religious tolerance in the FRY. The break in diplomatic relations has limited severely the U.S. Government's ability to engage directly with religious representatives. However, in the summer of 1999 and again in February 2000, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met with Bishop Artemije, head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, who expressed concern about the safety of the Serbs still living in Kosovo. During visits to Kosovo in July and November 1999, Secretary Albright delivered strong messages concerning ethnic tolerance in Kosovo. President Clinton also appealed for tolerance in the region on his visit in November 1999. U.S. KFOR peacekeeping troops have worked to prevent ethnic and religious violence in Kosovo and have guarded some religious sites. The U.S. is involved actively in UNMIK, the interim administration mission in Kosovo, which is aimed at securing peace, facilitating refugee return and reconstruction, laying the foundations for democratic self-government in the province, and fostering respect for human rights regardless of ethnicity or religion.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State identified the Federal Government of Serbia-Montenegro for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

In Montenegro the U.S. Government has provided significant support and assistance to the reform-oriented republic government, which also seeks to ensure respect for human rights, including religious freedom.

## SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. However, anti-Semitism persists among some elements of the population.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Constitution also provides for the right to change religion or faith, as well as the right to refrain from any religious affiliation.

Registration is not required, but under existing law, only registered churches and religious organizations have the explicit right to conduct public worship services and other activities, although no specific religions or practices are banned or discouraged by the authorities in practice. Those that register receive state benefits including subsidies for clergymen and office expenses. State funding also is provided to church schools and to teachers who lecture on religion in state schools. Occasionally, the State subsidizes one-time projects and significant church activities, and religious societies are partly exempt from paying taxes and import custom fees. A religion may elect not to accept the subsidies. There are 15 officially registered religions.

To register a new religion, it is necessary to submit a list of 20,000 permanent residents who adhere to that religion. There is no case of a religious order being refused registration and the religions already established before the law passed in 1991 were all exempt from the minimum membership requirement.

The Church Department at the Ministry of Culture administers relations between church and state. The Church Department manages the distribution of state subsidies to churches and religious associations. However, it cannot intervene in their internal affairs and does not direct their activities. The Ministry administers a cultural state fund—Pro Slovakia—which, among other things, allocates money to cover the repair of religious monuments. There is a government institute for relations between church and state.

Religious officials report that due to cuts in subsidies their ability to pay salaries of clergy was hindered.

Law 308/91 provides for freedom of religion and defines the status of churches and religious groups, including those groups not registered with the Government. It does not prohibit the existence of nontraditional religions.

In April 2000, the Parliament passed legislation establishing a private Catholic university in the town of Ruzomberok. The university is to be launched by the Roman Catholic Church and managed by the Conference of Bishops. It is to receive a state subsidy amounting to \$200,000 (Sk 8.6 million) in 2000; this amount is scheduled to be increased to \$445,000 (Sk 20 million) in 2001. Initially, the university is to consist of two faculties, pedagogical and philosophical, and a theological institute. In the future the Conference of Bishops plans to open a faculty for mass media.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is negotiating a treaty with the Vatican to define the framework of church-state relations and mutual commitments. It is expected to be signed in a few months.

#### *Religious Demography*

There are approximately 3.2 million Roman Catholics who make up 60.4 percent of the population. There are 180,000 Byzantine Catholics, who constitute roughly 3.4 percent of the population. There are 35,000 Orthodox believers, who make up 0.7 percent of the population. The Augsburg Lutheran Church has 330,000 members, who constitute 6.2 percent of the population. The Reformed Christian Church has 80,000 members and constitutes 1.7 percent of the population. Jehovah's Witnesses have 22,000 members. The Baptist Church has 2,500 members. The Brethren Church has 2,000 members. There are 1,700 Seventh-Day Adventists. The Apostolic Church has 1,200 members. The Evangelical Methodist Church has 1,100 members. Jewish congregations have 1,000 members. The Old Catholic Church has 900 mem-

bers. The Christian Corps in Slovakia has 700 members. The Czechoslovak Husite Church has 700 members. According to the 1991 census, 27.2 percent of the population had no religious affiliation.

According to a poll conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences in 1998, the number of practicing believers increased from 73 percent in 1991 to 83 percent in 1998. There was also an increase in the number of those who do not practice any religion, from 9.9 to 16.3 percent. Approximately 54 percent of Catholics and 22 percent of Lutherans actively participate in formal religious services.

There are three categories of nonregistered religions that comprise about 30 groups: nontraditional religions (Ananda Marga, Hare Krishna, Yoga in Daily Life, Osho, Sahadza Yoga, Shambaola Slovakia, Shri Chinmoy, Zazen International Slovakia, and Zen Center-myo Sahn Sah); the syncretic religious societies (Moonist, the Church of Scientology, Movement of the Holy Grail, and Baha'i); and the Christian religious societies (the Church of Christ, Manna Church, International Association of Full Evangelium Traders, Christian Communities, Nazarens, New Revelation, New Apostolic Church, Word of International Life, Society of the Friends of Jesus Christ, Sword of Spirit, Disciples of Jesus Christ, Universal Life, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon), Unification Church, and Free Peoples' Mission).

The law allows all churches and religious communities and enables them to send out their representatives as well as to receive foreign missionaries without limitation. Missionaries do not need special permission to stay in the country, nor are their activities regulated in any way.

According to Government information, there are missionaries from the Roman Catholic, Augsburg Lutheran, and Methodist faiths as well as a Jewish emissary active in the country. From among the nonregistered churches, there are Mormon missionaries.

Since 1989 the State has promoted inter-faith dialog and understanding by supporting events organized by various churches.

The state-supported Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia promotes communication within the religious community. All Christian churches have the status of members or observers in the Council. The Jewish community was invited, but chose not to participate.

Law 282/93 on restitution of communal property enabled all churches and religious societies to apply for the return of their property that was confiscated by the Communist government. The deadline for these claims was December 31, 1994. The property was returned in its current condition and the State did not provide any compensation for the damage to it during the previous regime. The property was returned by the State, by municipalities, by state legal entities, and under certain conditions even by private persons. In some cases, the property was returned legally by the State but has not been vacated by the former tenant—often a school or hospital with nowhere else to go—rendering no gain to the religious entity involved. There also have been problems with the return of property that had been undeveloped at the time of seizure but upon which there since has been construction. Churches, synagogues, and cemeteries have been returned, albeit mostly in poor condition. The churches and religious groups often lack the funds to repair these properties to a usable condition. The main obstacles to the resolution of outstanding restitution claims are the Government's lack of financial resources, due to its austerity program, and bureaucratic resistance on the part of those entities required to vacate restitutable properties. While the Orthodox Church reported that six of the seven properties on which it had filed claims already had been returned, the Catholic Church and the Federation of Jewish Communities reported lower rates of success. The Catholic Church reported that almost half of the property that it had claimed had been returned to it already. In another 12 percent of cases the property had been returned legally to the Church but typically was occupied by other tenants and would require court action to be returned to Church hands. The Church had not received any compensation for the remaining 40 percent of claims since these properties were undeveloped at the time of nationalization but since have been developed. The Church also is not eligible to reacquire lands that originally were registered to Church foundations that no longer exist or no longer operate in the country, like the Benedictines. The Federation of Jewish Communities (FJC) has reported some successful cases of restitution and has only a few pending cases that require resolution. These include cases in which property had been restituted to the FJC but not in usable condition; cases in which the property still is occupied by previous tenants; and lands upon which buildings had been constructed after the seizure of the property.



There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. However, the Government took several steps that contributed to religious tolerance. In February 2000, the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Judaism undertook an educational project on Jewish history and culture that is targeted to elementary and high school teachers of history, civic education, and ethics. This project is intended to assist in broadening the education of the public about Jewish themes, which were absent in the past, and increase tolerance toward minorities.

On May 18, 2000, the Government sponsored a national conference on racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and intolerance. At the conference the President announced that he would dedicate September 10 as a memorial day to victims of the Holocaust.

When the city council of the town of Zilina announced in March 2000 its decision to install a plaque honoring the Nazi-collaborationist wartime Slovak president, Jozef Tiso, on the city's Catholic community center, high-level politicians including President Rudolf Schuster and Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda made public statements condemning the proposal. The council reversed its decision (see Section I).

On November 3, 1999, Parliament passed legislation compensating citizens who were deported to German-controlled concentration camps during World War II on the basis of their nationality, race or religion. For each month of deportation, those eligible are to receive a cash sum of \$75 (Sk 3,000) plus a \$0.75 (Sk 30) addition to their monthly pension. Direct heirs of deceased victims, who were minors at the time of deportation, are entitled to a lump sum of up to approximately \$2,500 (Sk 100,000). The legislation disqualifies nearly 700 Slovak Jewish survivors from southern Slovakia, which was under Hungarian control during World War II, because they received compensation from the Hungarian Government. Of the 450 applications submitted to date, 200 were refused and only 50 applications have been processed completely. The Federation of Jewish Communities has asked the Justice Ministry to expedite its procedures in order to compensate the aging survivors.

In February 1999, police arrested two former high officials in the Slovak Secret Information Service (SIS) for involvement in the 1995 effort to discredit the chairman of the Slovak Bishops Conference. The SIS allegedly framed the bishop for selling religious art for personal gain. If convicted former Chief of the SIS Counterintelligence Unit Jaroslav Svehota and Deputy Director of the Surveillance Unit Robert Beno would face sentences of between 5 and 12 years in jail.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among churches and religious societies are amicable. However, anti-Semitism persists among some elements of the population.

In October 1998, police arrested four teenage skinheads who allegedly painted swastikas and pro-Fascist slogans on a business run by a Jewish manager in Zvolen, but released them because they were juveniles. In November 1998, approximately 40 gravestones in the Jewish cemetery in Nitra were overturned. The Ministry of Interior arrested four high school students from Nitra and one apprentice from Bratislava for the incident. Because they were juveniles, they were given only community service work as punishment.

Despite protests by the Federation of Jewish Communities, Slovak National Party members and the official Slovak cultural organization Matica Slovenska continued their efforts to rehabilitate the historical reputation of Jozef Tiso, the leader of the Nazi-collaborationist wartime Slovak state. On March 14, 2000, a marginal nationalist party, Slovak National Unity (SNU), held a rally to commemorate the 61st anniversary of the founding of the wartime Slovak State. The rally was attended by approximately 300 persons, including a number of skinheads. The police kept the event under tight control to prevent any violence. The chairman of the SNU, Stanislav Panis, in his tribute to Tiso appealed to the Government to make March 14 an official national holiday.

In March 2000, the official Slovak cultural organization Matica Slovenska and the confederation of political prisoners commemorated the 1939–1945 Slovak State at a meeting in which they emphasized the significance of March 14 as a symbol of Slovak statehood. Unlike previous years, prominent government officials did not attend.

The Lutheran Church, Jewish community, government officials, and NGO leaders and activists criticized the Zilina city council's decision to install a memorial plaque to commemorate the wartime Slovak president Jozef Tiso (see Section I.). The overwhelmingly negative public reaction led to the council to reverse its decision in March 2000.

In early 1999, the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Slovakia and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia had declared 1999 the year of Christian culture and invited the Ministry of Culture to join this project. These activities have been continued under the title "Great Anniversary of 2000."

An interconfessional tradition called the Week of Prayers for the Unity of Christians was established in 1994.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains contacts with a broad spectrum of religious groups. The Embassy assists U.S. groups in making contacts in the country and also encourages tolerance for minority religions.

Embassy officers meet with officials of the major religious groups on a regular basis to discuss property restitution issues as well as human rights conditions. Relations with religious groups are friendly and open. The Embassy continued its dialog with the Conference of Bishops, Federation of Jewish Communities, and the Orthodox Church. The Embassy has good relations with the Ministry of Culture and has fostered an effective dialog between religious groups, the Ministry, and the Commission for the Preservation of U.S. Heritage Abroad on matters of importance to the Commission.

The U.S. Embassy issued a press release criticizing the local initiative to install a plaque commemorating Josef Tiso. Embassy officers met with the head of Catholic Church, Cardinal Jan Korec, and the director of the local branch of Amnesty International to discuss human rights concerns, including those of a religious nature. The Embassy organized meetings between the First Lady and several officials of the Jewish community during her visit to the country in October 1999. Embassy officers have played an active role in assisting in restitution cases involving U.S. citizens and have assisted the Government in its attempts to become a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research and to initiate a Liaison Project on Holocaust education in cooperation with the Task Force.

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## SLOVENIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution provides that no person shall be compelled to admit his religious or other beliefs.

There are few formal requirements for recognition as a religion by the Government. The requirements are technical, and there were no reports that any group was denied registration during the period covered by this report. The Government's Office for Religious Communities registers organizations as religious with the Ministry of Interior and also convenes regular meetings of all 35 registered religious communities in the country.

Religious groups, including foreign missionaries, must register with the Ministry of the Interior if they wish to receive value added tax rebates on a quarterly basis. All groups in the country report equal access to registration and tax rebate status.

*Religious Demography*

While no data are available on active participation in religious services, citizens identify themselves as follows: about 71 percent are Roman Catholic, 2.5 percent are Serbian Orthodox, and 1.5 percent are Sunni Muslim. Protestants, largely Lutherans concentrated in the eastern part of the country, constitute less than 1 percent of the population. The remainder of the population considers itself agnostic or atheist.

Foreign missionaries, including a mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and religious groups (including Hare Krishna, Scientology, and Unification organizations) operate without hindrance.

The appropriate role for religious instruction in the schools continues to be an issue of debate. The Constitution states that parents are entitled to give their children "a moral and religious upbringing." Before 1945 religion was much more prominent in the schools, but now only those schools supported by religious bodies teach religion.

The Roman Catholic Church was a major property holder in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before World War II. After the war, much Church property—church buildings and support buildings, residences, businesses, and forests—was confiscated and nationalized by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

After Slovenian independence in 1991, Parliament passed legislation calling for denationalization (restitution and/or compensation) within a fixed period. The first post-independence government in 1991 was a center-right coalition headed by a Christian Democrat prime minister. However, a subsequent change of government in 1992 to a center-left coalition led by current Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek led to a virtual standstill in denationalization proceedings for several years. The strong opposition of the current Government toward returning large tracts of forest and other property to the Catholic Church is an frequently cited reason for the paralysis of the denationalization process.

As of mid-1999, only one-third of all cases had been adjudicated at the initial administrative level. Restitution of church property is a politically unpopular issue, and the Catholic Church, despite its numerical predominance, does not have the political support necessary to force a faster pace for denationalization.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Societal attitudes toward religion are complex. Historical events dating long before Slovene independence color societal perceptions of the dominant Catholic Church. Much of the gulf between the (at least nominally) Catholic center-right and the largely agnostic or atheistic left stems from the massacre of large numbers of alleged Nazi and Fascist collaborators in the years 1946–48. Many of the so-called collaborators were successful businessmen whose assets were confiscated after they were killed or driven from Slovenia, and many were prominent Catholics.

Inter-faith relations are correct, although there is little warmth between the majority Catholic Church and foreign missionary groups, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which are viewed as aggressive proselytizers.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has discussed worldwide religious freedom worldwide in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy has held extensive discussions with the Government on the topic of property denationalization in the context of the rule of law, although it has not specifically discussed church property during these sessions.

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**SPAIN**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The 1978 Constitution, which declares the country to be a secular state, and various laws provide that no religion should have the character of a state religion. However, the Government treats religions in different ways. Catholicism is the predominant religion and enjoys the closest official relationship with the Government as well as the most benefits, including financing through the tax system. The Government supports the Catholic Church with an amount close to \$1 million annually. Jews, Muslims, and Protestants also have official status but enjoy fewer privileges. These religions have bilateral agreements with the Government and receive some financial assistance from the Government. Other recognized religions, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), are covered by constitutional protections but have no special agreements with the Government.

The Organic Law of Religious Freedom of 1980 implements the constitutional provision for freedom of religion. The 1980 law establishes a legal regime and certain privileges for religious organizations. To enjoy the benefits of this regime, religious organizations must be entered in the Register of Religious Entities maintained by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. The register was established in 1981, and was updated most recently in 1998. In order to register with the Ministry of Justice, religious groups must submit documentation supporting their claim to be religions. If a group is turned down, it may appeal the decision to the courts. If it is judged not to be a religion, it may be included on a Register of Associations maintained by the Ministry of Interior. Inclusion on the Register of Associations grants legal status as authorized by the law regulating the right of association. Religions not officially recognized, such as the Church of Scientology, are treated as cultural associations.

The Catholic Church does not have to register with the Ministry of Justice's religious entities list; however, some entities do register for financial or other reasons. The first section of the Register of Religious Entities, called the special section, contains a list of religious entities created by the Catholic Church and a list of non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities that have an agreement on cooperation with the State. In 1992 agreements on cooperation with the State were signed by three organizations on behalf of Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. The organizations were the Federation of Evangelical Entities of Spain (FEREDE), the Federation of Israelite Communities of Spain (FCIE), and the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE).

##### *Religious Demography*

The Catholic Church hierarchy maintains that 93.63 percent of citizens are declared Catholics. However, many persons argue that this figure is based on numbers of baptisms, weddings, and first communions, events that are essentially social rites, and which are practiced by many who do not attend church regularly or believe in Catholic teachings. According to a survey published in April 2000 by the Center for Sociological Investigations, 83.6 percent of citizens consider themselves Catholics, 2 percent followers of other religions, 7.9 percent non-believers, and 4 percent atheists. The Federation of Protestant Churches represents 350,000 Protestants. The Federation of Spanish Islamic Entities (FEERI), located in Cordoba, estimates that there are more than 450,000 Muslims, not counting illegal immigrants (who could number a quarter million). There are approximately 25,000 Jews registered with the major Jewish organization. However 50,000 persons attend Jewish religious services in 13 of the country's 17 regions. There are 3,000 Buddhists registered, but according to their president, there are three times that many in practice.

There are 11,081 entities created by the Catholic Church in the first section of the Register of Religious Entities, and 570 non-Catholic churches, confessions, and

communities. The second section of the register, called the general section, contains non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities that do not have an agreement with the State, and their creations. There are 329 entities in this section. The third section contains canonical foundations of the Catholic Church. There are 153 entries in this section.

There are a total of 899 non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities in the register. These consist of 747 Protestant church entities, which have 1,643 places of worship. These include: Charismatics—89 entities and 113 places of worship; Assemblies of Brothers—120 entities and 143 places of worship; Baptists—213 entities and 247 places of worship; Pentecostals—64 entities and 259 places of worship; Presbyterians—36 entities and 58 places of worship; one entity of the Evangelical Church of Philadelphia, which has 613 places of worship; Church of Christ—9 entities and 19 places of worship; the Salvation Army—1 entity and 9 places of worship; Anglicans—17 entities and 26 places of worship; interdenominational churches and entities—60 entities and 13 places of worship; Churches for Attention to Foreigners—25 entities and 9 places of worship; Adventists—3 entities and 76 places of worship; and other evangelical churches—106 entities and 53 places of worship. In addition, there are also: Orthodox—5 entities and 5 places of worship; Christian Scientists—3 entities and no places of worship; Jehovah's Witnesses—1 entity and 873 places of worship; Mormons—1 entity and 30 places of worship; other Christian confessions—10 entities and 29 places of worship; Judaism—15 entities and 15 places of worship; Islam—99 entities and 45 places of worship; Baha'is—2 entities and 12 places of worship; Hinduism—3 entities and no places of worship; Buddhism—13 entities and 13 places of worship; and other confessions—3 entities and 12 places of worship.

Foreign missionaries proselytize in the country.

Religion courses are offered in public schools but are not mandatory. There are religious schools, supported by the Catholic Church.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Freedom of Religion*

There are some allegations that the Government discriminates against non-Catholic religions. A senior Protestant leader stated that Protestants want the same tax exemptions as Catholics, the same access to legal services, the same right to establish foundations, the same presence in the communications media, and better treatment in the matter of religious groups.

According to a senior Muslim leader, in 1999 30 Muslim girls in Granada were required to remove their veils for their national identity card photos; Catholic nuns are not required to remove their head coverings for their identity card photos.

The Defense Ministry requires soldiers to declare their religion before allowing entry into military barracks by any religious figures other than Catholic army chaplains. The State funds Catholic chaplains who serve in hospitals.

The government income tax form includes a box that allows taxpayers to assign 0.5239 percent of their taxes to the Catholic Church. Protestant and Muslim leaders would like their adherents to have a similar option. The Government was agreeable to adding the three "established religions"—Protestants, Jews, and Muslims—to the income tax check-box list, and opened negotiations with the Protestants on this subject on April 15, 1999. As of mid-2000, both Protestants and Muslims had been added to the list.

The Jewish community wants to receive money from the Government, but does not want to be included in the check-box list on the income tax form. This reticence is attributed to the community's past history, which included persecution and expulsion from the country in 1492. In addition to an annual subsidy, the Jewish community is asking for a one-time reparations payment for the community's historic experience of suffering. A spokesman for the Jewish community said that Jews would not claim compensation for their lost patrimony, but would like the State to give back part of what was once theirs and is now in the hands of the Catholic Church. These properties could then be used jointly by Jews and Catholics. The Jewish community also wants the Government to resolve problems associated with Jewish cemeteries. (Under the law, land for cemeteries is not granted in perpetuity, and it is expected that cemeteries may be moved and the land developed for urban uses if the need so arises.)

In May 1999, the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament approved a nonbinding resolution calling on the Government to reinforce measures against the activity of destructive "sects" in the country and to create a permanent observatory to monitor these organizations. In press reports, sources cited figures attributed to the Interior Ministry stating that there were 200 destructive sects in the country, which have between 100,000 and 150,000 members. The Law of Sects in Spain, passed in 1989, authorizes the police to investigate sects with a destructive character. As a result,

a special unit was created within the police to investigate allegedly destructive sects.

The government of the Canary Islands, one of Spain's 17 regions, has refused to grant permission to the Salvation Army to open a center for needy children, on the grounds that the Salvation Army is a "destructive sect."

In early April 1999, the Helsinki Human Rights Federation presented a report to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that included criticism of Spain for failing to implement its commitment in the 1994 Budapest Document on freedom of religion and conscience. The report criticized Spain for discrimination against "new religions," which often are considered by authorities to be dangerous and destructive, while older, established religions continue to receive financial and other privileges from the State.

The regional government of Catalunya's 1999 failure to renew three broadcast licenses belonging to the "Network of Popular Spanish Airwaves," or "Cadena Cope," would have effectively shut down three of the Catholic Church's FM radio stations. However, this decision was challenged successfully in the Supreme Court of Justice of Catalunya by the Cope. The Court ruled in March 2000 that the criteria used by the regional government to determine the award or renewal of licenses and frequencies placed a disproportionate emphasis on the planned use of the Catalan language in the programming, adding that this violated constitutional provisions for free access to information. The Government elected not to appeal the decision and announced its intention to review the applications again, using more balanced criteria.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officials meet with religious leaders of the various denominations.

## SWEDEN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The rights and freedoms enumerated in the Constitution include freedom of worship, protection from compulsion to make known one's religious views, and protection from compulsion to belong to a religious community.

The country has maintained a state (Lutheran) church for several hundred years, supported by a general "church tax" (although the Government routinely grants any request by a taxpayer for exemption from that tax). The Church of Sweden receives state financial support not offered to other religions.

In 1995 after decades of discussion, the state church and the Government agreed to a formal separation. This reform came into effect in 2000. However, the Church still is to receive some state support.

*Religious Demography*

As of 1996, citizens were no longer automatically members of the state church at birth. It is possible to leave the state church, but very few persons do. Eighty-four percent belong to the Church of Sweden.

There are about 165,000 Catholics, and the Orthodox Church has around 100,000 members, the main national groups being Greek, Serbian, Syrian, Romanian, Estonian and Finnish. There is a large Finnish-speaking Lutheran denomination in Sweden. The number of Muslims has increased rapidly in recent years to between 250,000 and 300,000. Mosques are being built in many parts of the country. There are around 17,000 Jews, of whom 8,500 are members of a congregation. Buddhists and Hindus number around 3,000 to 4,000 each. Although no reliable statistics are available, it is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the adult population are atheist.

The major religious communities and the state church are spread across the country. Large numbers of immigrants in recent decades have led to the introduction of nontraditional religions in those communities populated by immigrants.

In October 1998, the Government published a report by a commission of experts entitled "In Good Faith—Society and New Religious Movements." The report sought to gauge the needs of persons leaving new religious movements for support from the larger Swedish community. It paid special attention to the needs of children. According to the commission, each year approximately 100 persons seek assistance for various medical, legal, social, economic, or spiritual difficulties arising from their departure from new religious movements. The commission recommended passage of legislation making "improper influence" (such as forcing an individual to renounce his or her faith, or other such "manipulation") a punishable offense. The commission's proposal for legislation requires further investigation by the Government. The commission also proposed the establishment of a foundation for the study of questions of belief and to help build bridges between new religious movements and mainstream society.

While weekly services in Christian houses of worship generally are poorly attended, a great many persons observe major festivals of the ecclesiastical year and prefer a ceremony with a religious stamp to mark the turning points of life. About 78 percent of children are baptized, 50 percent of all those eligible are confirmed, and 90 percent of funeral services are performed under the auspices of the state church. Approximately 62 percent of couples marrying choose a Church of Sweden ceremony. Around 100,000 of the 250,000 to 300,000 Muslims in the country are active religiously. Large numbers of Jews attend high holiday services but attendance at weekly services is low.

There is a relatively large number of smaller church bodies. Several are offshoots of 19th century revival movements in the Church of Sweden. Others, such as the Baptist Union of Sweden and the Methodist Church of Sweden, trace their roots to British and North American revival movements. There are Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues. Muslim affiliations are represented among immigrant groups predominantly from the Shi'a and Sunni branches of Islam.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and other foreign missionary groups are active in the country. They do not face special requirements.

In 1986 Parliament established the Office of the Ombudsman Against Ethnic Discrimination, whose task is to ensure that individuals and groups do not suffer discrimination "due to race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, or religion." For many years the Government has supported the activities of groups working to combat anti-Semitism.

The Government promotes inter-faith understanding and meets annually with representatives from various religious groups. The Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities (SST) is a government body. It cooperates with the Swedish Free Church Council. SST members are selected by religious bodies, which are entitled to some forms of state financial assistance.

In 1985 the Parliament resolved that public education should adopt an intercultural approach. There is an overall time schedule for compulsory course work in public schools. Religious education is part of this schedule, but is not limited to instruction in the state religion.

The law permits official institutions, such as government ministries and Parliament, to provide copies to the public of documents that are filed with them, even though such documents may be unpublished and protected by copyright law. This is due to a contradiction between the Constitution's freedom of information provisions and the country's international obligations to protect unpublished copyrighted works. This contradiction has affected copyrighted, unpublished documents belonging to the Church of Scientology which have been made available to the public by the Parliament in accordance with domestic legislation. The Government is now in

the process of drafting new legislation designed to eliminate the contradiction and protect copyrights.

In January 1998, the Government began a national Holocaust education project after a public opinion poll found that only a low percentage of school children had basic knowledge about the Holocaust. Approximately 1 million copies of the education project's core textbook (available at no cost to every household with children, including in the most prevalent immigrant languages) are in circulation among the population of 9 million. Also in May 1998, the Prime Minister initiated the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, to combat anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance by placing international political support behind efforts to teach about the Holocaust. Eight other countries, including the United States, are members of the Task Force. In January 2000 the Government established January 27, the anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation, as a national day of remembrance. Also in January 2000, Sweden hosted a large, high level international conference on Holocaust education. The Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was attended by over 40 countries and over 20 heads of state and government.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who have been abducted or illegally removed from the United States or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Citizens are tolerant of diverse religions practiced in the country, including the Mormon faith and Scientology. However, there is limited anti-Semitism, which occasionally manifests itself in the vandalization of synagogues with graffiti and in threatening letters. In 1997 there were two cases of synagogues being vandalized with graffiti. In 1998 there was one case. No cases were reported in 1999 or the first half of 2000. The only anti-Semitic incident of note during 1999 involved an assault by neo-Nazi teenagers on a Jewish musical conductor in July of that year. The teenagers involved were tried and incarcerated. Some immigrant groups have experienced discrimination or violence due to their ethnic background or race. The Government criticizes such practices and prosecutes offenders.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The U.S. Government is a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. The Task Force is an intergovernmental multinational Government initiative to combat anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat led the U.S. delegation to the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, and President Clinton addressed the forum in a videotaped message.

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## SWITZERLAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.



There is no official state church. However, all of the cantons financially support at least one of the three traditional denominations—Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, or Protestant—with funds collected through taxation. Each of the 26 states (cantons) has its own regulations regarding the relationship between church and state. In all cantons an individual may choose not to contribute to church taxes. However, in some cantons private companies are unable to avoid payment of the church tax. A religious organization must register with the Government in order to receive tax-exempt status. There have been no reports of a non-traditional religious group applying for the “church taxation” status that the traditional three denominations enjoy.

The Government is considering formulating a national policy on “sects.” In July 1999, the Business Review Commission of the National Assembly issued a report entitled “Sects or Assimilative Movements in Switzerland,” containing recommendations to the Government on the need for state involvement and the creation of national policy. The Commission recommended that the Government formulate a “sect” policy and coordinate the cooperation of researchers and informational and counseling committees. In June 2000, the Government rejected the Business Review Commission’s recommendation to formulate a national sect policy. The Government said such a policy would conflict with the constitutional right to freedom of religious beliefs. The Government also opposed the creation of a National Information and Counseling Center pointing out that religious matters fall under the jurisdiction of the cantons.

#### *Religious Demography*

Although traditionally approximately 95 percent of the population have been split 50–50 between the Protestant and Catholic churches, in the last 10 years there has been a trend of persons formally renouncing their membership and thus excluding themselves from church taxation. According to the 1990 census, the trend of renouncing church membership accounts for a loss of 1 to 2 percent for each of the three traditional religions. Membership in religious denominations is as follows: Roman Catholic—44 percent, Protestant—40 percent, Atheist—7 percent, Muslim—2 percent, Eastern religions—1 percent. Other denominations account for trace percentages: Christian, other—58,501, new religious movements—19,175, Jewish—17,577, Old Catholic—11,768, and unknown/undecided—1 percent.

Muslims have grown to at least 200,000, fueled by the influx of Yugoslav refugees in recent years. Muslims practice their religion throughout the country. Although only two mosques exist—in Zurich and Geneva—there have been no reports of difficulties in Muslims buying or renting space to worship. Although occasional complaints arise, such as a Muslim employee not being given time to pray during the workday, attitudes are generally tolerant toward Muslims, who constitute the country’s largest non-Christian minority.

Groups of foreign origin are free to proselytize. Groups such as Young Life, Youth for Christ, Church of Scientology, Youth With a Mission, the Salvation Army, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Islamic Call are also active in the country. Experts estimate that between 300 to 800 denominations and groups are established throughout the country.

Foreign missionaries must obtain a “religious worker” visa to work in the country. Requirements include proof that the foreigner would not displace a citizen from doing the job, that the foreigner would be financially supported by the host organization, and that the country of origin of religious workers also grants visas to Swiss religious workers. Youth “interns” may qualify for special visas as well.

Religion is taught in public schools. The doctrine presented depends on which religion predominates in the particular state. However, those of different faiths are free to attend classes for their own creeds during the class period. Atheists are allowed to skip the classes. Parents also may send their children to private schools or teach their children at home.

In response to the issue of Holocaust era assets, the Government and private sector initiated a series of measures designed to shed light on the past, provide assistance to Holocaust victims, and address claims to dormant accounts in Swiss banks. These measures include: The Independent Commission of Experts under Professor Jean-Francois Bergier, charged with examining the country’s wartime history and its role as a financial center;

the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons under Paul Volcker, charged with resolving the issue of dormant World War II era accounts in Swiss banks; and the Swiss Special Fund for Needy Holocaust Victims, which received approximately \$190 million (273 million Swiss francs) in contributions from the private sector and

the Swiss National bank. In August 1998, a \$1.25 billion settlement of the class action lawsuit filed in the U.S. against Swiss banks was announced.

The debate over the country's World War II record contributed to the problem of anti-Semitism (see Section II). The Federal Council took action to address the problem of anti-Semitism. In December 1999, the Council reiterated a statement of regret first made in 1997 over Switzerland's failures to assist minorities fleeing the Nazi regime. On December 13, 1999, it established an association for a Center of Tolerance in Zurich. The aim of the center is to keep alive lessons of the past, to encourage ongoing analysis of history and current events, and to make clear the danger of possible manifestations of racism and xenophobia. The center's activities include a permanent exhibit in Bern and two traveling exhibits per year, as well as workshops. Its facilities include research and documentation offices.

The Government does not initiate inter-faith activities.

Of the country's 16 largest political parties, only three—the Evangelical People's Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Christian Social Party—subscribe to a religious philosophy. There have been no reports of individuals being excluded from a political party because of their beliefs. Some groups have organized their own parties, such as the Transcendental Meditation Maharishi's Party of Nature and the Argentinean Guru's Humanistic Party. However, none of these have gained enough of a following to win political representation.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Due to increasing concern over certain groups, especially Scientology, the Government in 1997 asked an advisory commission to examine Scientology. The commission's 1998 report concluded that there was no basis for special monitoring of Scientology, since it did not represent any direct or immediate threat to the security of the country. However, the report stated that Scientology had characteristics of a totalitarian organization and had its own intelligence network. The commission also warned of the significant financial burden imposed on Scientology members and recommended reexamining the issue at a later date. There have been no new developments in this regard.

In 1998 the city of Basel passed a law banning aggressive tactics for handing out flyers. This action was prompted by complaints about Scientologists' methods. In June 1999, Scientology suffered a setback when it lost a bid in the country's highest court to overturn a municipal law that barred persons from being approached on the street by those using "deceptive or dishonest methods." The Court ruled that a 1998 Basel law, prompted by efforts to curb Scientology, involved an intervention in religious freedom but did not infringe on it.

The city of Buchs, St. Gallen, also has passed a law modeled on the Basel law. However, it is still legal to proselytize in nonintrusive ways, such as public speaking on the street or by going door-to-door in neighborhoods.

In Zurich in June 1995 Scientologists appealed a city decision that prohibited them from distributing flyers on public property. In a qualified victory for the Scientologists, a higher court decided in September 1999 that the Scientologists' activities were commercial and not religious, and that the city should grant them and other commercial enterprises such as fast food restaurants more freedom to distribute flyers on a permit basis. Fearing a heavy administrative and enforcement workload, the city has appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decision rejected the appeal in June 2000, reinforcing the decision by the previous court that the Scientologists' activities were commercial in nature. The Supreme Court decision is expected to establish a nationwide legal guideline on the issue.

In Winterthur city authorities require Scientologists to apply for an annual permit to sell their books on public streets. The permit limits their activities to certain areas and certain days. This practice has been in effect since 1995 when a district court upheld fines issued to Scientologists by the city for accosting passersby to invite them onto their premises to sell them books and do personality tests. The court ruled that the Scientologists' activities were primarily commercial, rather than religious, which required them to get an annual permit for the book sale on public property and prohibited them from distributing flyers or other advertising material. The Supreme Court ruling in the Zurich case is expected to set a precedent for this case as well.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable.

In the context of discussions over Nazi gold and Holocaust era assets, anti-Semitic slurs reportedly still remain a problem, although there was no marked increase over the previous year. Government officials, including the President, have spoken frequently and publicly against anti-Semitism. According to the 1999 Swiss National Security Report, between 1995, when the anti-racism law was enacted, and December 1999, there were 104 cases brought to court under the anti-racism law, with 45 convictions. Of those, 15 persons were convicted for anti-Semitism, 9 for revisionism, 20 for racist oral or written slurs, and 1 for other reasons. The heaviest penalty was a 15-month imprisonment and a fine of \$12,000 (20,000 Swiss francs) against a person for denying the existence of the Holocaust.

In November 1998, the Federal Commission Against Racism released a report on anti-Semitism in Switzerland, expressing concern that the recent controversy over the country's role during World War II had to some extent opened the door to expressions of latent anti-Semitism. At the same time, the Commission described the emergence of strong public opposition to anti-Semitism and credited the Federal Council with taking a "decisive stand" against anti-Semitism. The Commission also proposed various public and private measures to combat anti-Semitism and encourage greater tolerance and understanding.

In response the Federal Council has committed to intensify efforts to combat anti-Semitic sentiment and racism. The Federal Council welcomed the publicly funded Bergier Commission report in December 1999 that disclosed Switzerland's World War II record on turning away certain refugees fleeing from Nazi oppression, including Jewish applicants. The Federal Council described the publication of the Bergier Report as an occasion for reflection and discussion of Switzerland's World War II history. The Federal Council took action to address the problem of anti-Semitism (see Section I).

In March 2000, a Geneva research group released a survey in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee in New York, stating that anti-Semitic views are held by 16 percent of Swiss citizens. Other prominent survey firms, as well as some Jewish leaders, disputed the accuracy of the Geneva firm's survey, stating that the survey overestimated the prevalence of anti-Semitic views. According to the survey, 33 percent of the Swiss People's Party (SV) supporters voiced anti-Semitic views. However, the survey found that 92 percent of all Swiss youth rejected anti-Semitic notions. The survey reflected some inconsistencies. For example, during the recent period of controversy over the country's World War II record, public opinion in support of Switzerland's anti-racism laws actually strengthened.

Many nongovernmental organizations coordinate inter-faith events throughout the country.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with both Government officials and representatives of the various faiths and in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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**TAJIKISTAN**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions, and the Government monitors the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political.

There was no change in the overall status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. However, a national referendum in September 1999 amended the Constitution to legalize religiously oriented political parties, and two representatives of one such party were elected to Parliament. Legal action was initiated against one evangelical Christian congregation that for many years has declined to register with the Government.

The Government continues to pursue an aggressive policy of secularism, which it tends to define in anti-religious rather than nonreligious terms. Government policies

reflect a pervasive fear of Islamic fundamentalism, a fear shared by much of the general population.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions, and the Government monitors the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political. According to the Law on Religion and Religious Organizations, religious communities must be registered by the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers, which monitors the activities of Muslim groups, the Russian Orthodox Church, and possibly other religious establishments. While the official reason given to justify registration is to ensure that religious groups act in accordance with the law, the practical purpose is to ensure that they do not become overly political. In 1997 the Council of the Islamic Center was subordinated to the Government Committee on Religious Affairs. This move took place quietly, and with no apparent objection from the observant Muslim community.

Regularly throughout the period covered by this report President Imomali Rahmonov aggressively defended secularism, which in the Tajik political context is a highly politicized term that carries the strong connotation—likely understood both by the President and his audience—of being “antireligious” rather than “nonreligious.” The President also occasionally criticized Islam as a political threat. While the vast majority of citizens, including members of the Government, consider themselves Muslims and are not anti-Islamic, there is a pervasive fear of Islamic fundamentalism among both progovernment forces and much of the population at large.

On May 23, 1998, Parliament passed a law prohibiting the creation of political parties with a religious orientation. The United Tajik Opposition (UTO), the largest component of which is the Islamic Revival Party (IRP), along with international organizations and foreign governments, strongly criticized the law for violating the June 1997 peace agreement, which included a government commitment to lift the ban on member parties of the UTO. The post-independence 1992–97 civil war was fought in part over differing views of the role of religion in the republic. On June 2, 1998, President Rahmonov established a Special Conciliation Commission to resolve the dispute. On June 18, the Commission reported that it had devised compromise language for the law, banning parties from receiving support from religious institutions. A new version of the law including the compromise language was passed in the November 1998 parliamentary session. A constitutional amendment passed in a September 26, 1999 referendum, states that the State is secular and that citizens can be members of parties formed on a religious basis. Two representatives from a religiously oriented party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, now sit in the lower house of the national Parliament.

##### *Religious Demography*

An estimated 95 percent of the citizens, about 5,550,000 persons, consider themselves to be Muslims, although the degree of religious observance varies widely. Only an estimated 10 percent regularly follow Muslim practices (such as daily prayer and dietary restrictions) or attend services at mosques. About 3 percent of all Muslims are Ismailis; almost all reside in the remote Gorno-Badakhshan region. The rest of the Muslim population is Sunni. There are more than 4,000 registered mosques open for daily prayers. (An exact figure was not available from the State Committee on Religion. The number appears to have risen significantly in comparison to the previous figure of 3,082 only because of a government effort to force existing mosques to register and thus pay registration fees.) In addition there are 237 so-called “Friday mosques” (which are large facilities built for Friday prayers) registered with the State Committee on Religion. These figures do not include Ismaili places of worship because complete data were unavailable. There is no religious conflict between these two groups. There are approximately 230,000 Christians, mostly consisting of ethnic Russians and other Soviet-era immigrant groups. The largest Christian group is Russian Orthodox, but there are also Baptists (five registered organizations), Roman Catholics (two registered organizations), Seventh-Day Adventists (one registered organization), Korean Protestants (one registered organization), Lutherans (no data on registration), and Jehovah’s Witnesses (one registered organization). Other religious minorities are very small and include Baha’is (four registered organizations), Zoroastrians (no data on registered organizations), Hare Krishnas (one registered organization), and Jews (one registered organization).

Each of these groups probably totals less than 1 percent of the general population. The overwhelming majority of them live in the capital or other large cities.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Missionaries of registered religious groups are not restricted legally and proselytize openly. There were no reports of harassment of such groups, but neither are missionaries particularly welcomed. Christian missionaries from Western nations, Korea, India, and other countries are present, but their numbers are quite small. Current estimates put the number of recent Christian converts at approximately 2,000 persons. However, the Government's fear of Islamic terrorists prompts it to restrict visas for Muslim missionaries. There was evidence of an unofficial ban on foreign missionaries who are perceived as Islamic fundamentalists.

Aside from the registration requirement, there are few official constraints on religious practice, but government officials sometimes issue extrajudicial restrictions. For example, the mayor of Dushanbe prohibited mosques from using microphones for the 5-times-daily call to prayer. There are also reports that some local officials have forbidden members of the Islamic Revival Party from speaking in mosques in their region. However, this restriction is more a reflection of political rather than religious differences. In Isfara, following allegations that a private Arabic language school was hosting a suspected Uzbek terrorist, the authorities imposed restrictions on private Arabic language schools (to include restrictions on private Islamic instruction). These restrictions appear to be based on political concerns, but the effect on private religious instruction is also clear.

The Government arrested numerous members of the Islamist organization, Hizb Ut-Tahrir (Party of Emancipation) in the northern, primarily ethnic Uzbek, Leninobod district. According to a press account, over 50 of the Hizb Ut-Tahrir organization's members were arrested between January and April 2000. At least two of the detainees reportedly were charged with disseminating subversive literature and planning to overthrow the Government. This organization is linked with an organization of the same name in Uzbekistan which calls for the creation of a Muslim caliphate in the country and has become a target of repression by the Uzbek Government, which has accused its members of acting against the constitutional order and of belonging to an extremist group.

An unregistered Baptist congregation in Dushanbe was informed in early 2000 that it was obliged to register with the Government, but the Baptists refused on the grounds that they are a branch of the larger All-Baptist Churches, an organization of Baptist churches from throughout the former Soviet Union. They argued that only their leadership in Moscow has the right to register with a government authority. Proceedings began against the Baptists in March 2000 and the court fined the congregation a little more than 50 cents (1,000 Tajik rubles). The congregation refuses to pay as a matter of principle. There have been some instances of petty harassment of the church, with the militia on at least one occasion taking down the sign outside the congregation's building.

Although there is no official state religion, the Government has declared two Islamic holidays, Id Al'fitr and Idi Qurbon, as state holidays.

There were government-imposed restrictions on the number of pilgrims allowed to go on the Hajj in 1999. Individuals were not permitted to travel in a personal vehicle; persons were required to travel by government-owned transportation, primarily buses. There were regional quotas on the number of pilgrims, which led to corruption as places were sold. The motivation for quotas and other restrictions appears to be profit (maximizing bribes from Hajj pilgrims), rather than discouraging a religious practice.

Government publishing houses are prohibited from publishing anything in Arabic script; they do not publish religious literature. However, in the first half of 1998, the President initiated a project to publish a Tajik version of the Koran in both Cyrillic and Arabic script. The books were printed in Iran and sold through the Iranian bookshop in Dushanbe. There are small private publishers that publish Islamic materials without serious problems. There is no restriction on the distribution or possession of the Koran, the Bible, or other religious works. The Islamic Renaissance Party, a religiously oriented party, began publishing *Najot*, a weekly newspaper, in 1999. Privately owned mass-circulation newspapers regularly published articles explaining Islamic beliefs and practices.

There was no change in the overall status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. However, a national referendum in September 1999 amended the Constitution to permit religiously oriented political parties, and two representatives of one such party were elected to Parliament.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Conflict between different religious groups is virtually unknown, in part because there are so few non-Muslims. However, some Muslim leaders occasionally have expressed concern that minority religious groups undermine national unity.

There were no reports that conservative Muslims in rural areas physically harassed non-Muslim women for not wearing traditional attire during the period covered by this report.

The small Baha'i community normally does not experience prejudice, but a prominent 88-year-old member of the community was killed in his home in Dushanbe in September 1999. Members of the Baha'i community believe that he was killed because of his religion, since none of his personal possessions were taken from the murder scene. Police have made no arrests, but militant Islamists aligned with Iran are considered likely perpetrators.

On July 28, 1998, an unknown group near Dushanbe kidnaped the imam of the central mosque, Mullo Giyomiddin. His body was found some days later. There have been no developments in the case. His successor, Mullo Khudoiberdi, was kidnaped on September 3, 1998, but was released after a few days. There have been no arrests in the case. Motives behind these crimes are unclear.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

Through public diplomacy, the U.S. Embassy has supported programs designed to create a better understanding of how democracies address the issue of secularism and religious freedom. Several participants in these programs are key members of the opposition who now, through their writings and their debate on the definition of secularism, reveal a more sophisticated understanding of the concept and of how secularism and religious activism can coexist in a free society.

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**TURKEY**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government imposed some restrictions on religious minorities and on religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities.

There was no significant change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, there were a few positive developments.

Government policy and the mostly amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, extremist groups or individuals target minority communities from time to time. Unknown perpetrators damaged Greek Orthodox community property. Some converts to Christianity face harassment. The Muslim community continued to engage in a heated debate over the question of wearing traditional religious clothing in government facilities, including universities. The Government brought legal action against several prominent Islamist politicians, businesspersons, and writers, for allegedly "inciting hatred" through speech (albeit usually of a political, not a religious, nature). Police detained and arrested some Turkish Christians for allegedly proselytizing or for unauthorized gatherings.

The U.S. Government frequently discusses religious freedom issues with the Government.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it imposes some restrictions on religious minorities and on Muslim religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities. The Constitution establishes Turkey as a secular state and provides for freedom of belief, freedom of worship, and the private dis-

semination of religious ideas. However, these rights are restricted by constitutional provisions ensuring the integrity and existence of the State, and rejecting “discrimination on the basis of religion.”

The Government oversees Muslim religious facilities and education through its Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). The Diyanet, which some groups claim reflects the beliefs of the Sunni Islamist mainstream, regulates the operation of the country’s more than 70,000 mosques, and employs local and provincial imams, who are civil servants. The Government states that the Diyanet treats equally all that request services.

A separate government agency, the Office of Foundations (Vakiflar Genel Mudurlugu), regulates some activities of religious minorities including those established under the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish), and their affiliated churches, monasteries, and religious schools. The Vakiflar, which dates back to the Ottoman Empire, must approve the operation of churches, monasteries, synagogues, schools, and charitable religious foundations, such as hospitals and orphanages.

There are 160 minority foundations, including Greek Orthodox (about 70 sites), Armenian Orthodox (about 50), and Jewish (20), as well as Syrian Christians, Chaldeans, Bulgarian Orthodox, Georgians, and Maronis. Minority foundations, including those of religions recognized under the Lausanne Treaty, may not acquire property for any purpose, although they can lose it. If a community does not use its property because of a decline in the size of its congregation over 10 years, the Vakiflar takes over direct administration and ownership. If such minorities can demonstrate a renewed community need, they may apply legally to recover their properties.

During the period covered by this report, the military and judiciary, with support from other members of the country’s secular elite, continued to wage a private and public campaign against Islamic fundamentalism, which they view as a threat to the secular republic. The National Security Council (NSC)—a powerful military/civilian body established by the Constitution to advise senior leadership on national security matters—categorizes fundamentalism as a primary threat to public safety and order. At a meeting in March 2000, the NSC discussed a report that claimed that fundamentalist Islamic elements had increased their activities in a number of areas, including infiltrating government ministries. However, the same NSC report noted that legislative measures have been taken on only 5 points of the February 1997 18-point program against fundamentalism.

Many prosecutors regard proselytizing and religious activism on the part of Evangelical Christians, and particularly Islamists, with suspicion, especially when such activities are deemed to have political overtones. There is no law that explicitly prohibits proselytizing or religious conversions; however, police sometimes arrest proselytizers for disturbing the peace or distributing literature that has criminal or separatist elements. Courts usually dismiss such charges. If the proselytizers are foreigners, they may be deported, but generally they are able to reenter the country.

#### *Religious Demography*

About 99 percent of the population are Muslim, primarily Sunni. In addition to the country’s Sunni majority, there is a significant Shi’a minority, of which an estimated 12 million are Alawis. Alawis, a heterodox Muslim Shi’a sect, are recognized as a distinct legal school within the 12 imam Shi’a tradition. Their rituals include men and women praying together through speeches, poetry, and dance.

There are several non-Muslim religious minority groups; most are concentrated in Istanbul and other large cities. While exact population figures are not available, these include an estimated 50,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians, 25,000 Jews, and roughly 3,000 Greek Orthodox adherents. There are approximately 3,000 Protestants and 10,000 Baha’is. Additionally, there are an estimated 15,000 Syrian Orthodox (Syriac) Christians and a small, undetermined number of Bulgarian, Chaldean, Nestorian, Georgian, and Maronite Christians. The number of Christians in the southeast has declined as the younger generation, especially among Syriacs, leaves the area to live in Istanbul, Europe, or North America.

There are no known estimates on the number and religious affiliation of foreign missionaries in the country.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

As a minority within the predominant (Sunni Muslim) faith, Alawis freely practice their religion and build “Cem houses” (Alawi places of gathering). Some Alawis allege discrimination in the form of failure to include any of their doctrines or beliefs in religious instruction classes, and charge a Sunni bias in the Diyanet, which they claim tends to view the Alawis as a cultural rather than religious group. However,

some Sunni Islamic political activists charge that the secular State favors and is under the influence of the Alawis. No funds are allocated specifically from the Diyanet budget for Alevi activities. In addition, there are no government-salaried Alawi religious leaders, in contrast to Sunni religious leaders.

Tarikats (Sufi religious orders) and other mystical Sunni Islamic, quasi-religious, and social orders have been banned officially since the 1920's, but largely are tolerated. In recent years, the National Security Council has called for stricter enforcement of the ban as part of its campaign against the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism. Nevertheless, prominent political and social leaders continue to be associated with Tarikats. There were no significant legal actions undertaken against the Tarikats during the reporting period.

The military regularly dismisses from the service individuals whose official files reflect participation in Islamist fundamentalist activities. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upheld one such dismissal in 1998; other cases are pending.

The Government continued to enforce a more than 50-year-old ban on the wearing of religious head coverings at universities or by civil servants in public buildings. Some women who wear head coverings, and both men and women who actively have shown support for those who defy the ban, have lost their jobs in the public sector as nurses and teachers; some others were not allowed to register as university students. In December 1999, the country's Council of State (Danistay) overturned a lower court decision that would have permitted a student to attend a university wearing a headscarf. The Danistay based its decision on the rationale that universities are public institutions and, as such, have an obligation to protect the country's basic principles, including secularism. In its decision, the court referred to its understanding of a ruling by the ECHR in favor of Turkey, noting that students had to abide by university dress codes, and that the wearing of a headscarf could be construed as pressure on other students.

In November 1999, the Malatya State Security Court (SSC) decided to remove the threat of the death penalty and charges of attempting to change the constitutional order by force, and instead charged 48 defendants, arrested for staging violent protests against the headscarf ban of May 1999 at Malatya's Inonu University, under the (Turkish law 2911) meetings and demonstrations law and Penal Code article (312/2) of "promoting enmity" along religious lines. It sentenced them to jail terms of 18 months to 5 years. Appeals continue. Twenty-two others were acquitted, 4 cases continue, and 2 were transferred.

Merve Kavakci, elected in April 1999 from the Fazilet (Virtue) Party, unsuccessfully sought to be sworn in to Parliament wearing an Islamist-style head covering. Kavakci's case highlighted the ongoing dispute over the ban on wearing religious-style clothing in official settings. She later was stripped of Turkish citizenship on the grounds that she had violated the law by assuming another country's citizenship without notifying proper authorities. She appealed the verdict and lost. Kavakci also lost her parliamentary privileges soon after her citizenship was revoked, although not her elective office since Parliament has not voted to remove her. The issue of headscarves in Parliament, in terms of legislation that would give a final definition to the parliamentary dress code, remains unresolved.

In May 1999, a case was filed at the Constitutional Court to close the Islamist Fazilet Party for promoting anti-secular activity and for representing the ideologies of the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party, which was banned in 1998. The indictment also calls for banning Fazilet's leaders from politics for 5 years and stripping its Members of Parliament (M.P.'s) of their seats. The case still is pending before the Constitutional Court.

In March 2000, Islamist former prime minister Necmettin Erbakan was convicted under the Penal Code (Article 312) of "promoting enmity" along religious lines, for a speech he had made in 1994 in which (inter alia) he referred to parliamentarians as "infidels." He was sentenced to 1 year's imprisonment, pending appeal. Human rights groups and some politicians criticized the verdict as undemocratic, but the judiciary and many mainstream politicians defended it. Also in March, the chairman of the Islamic business-oriented association Musiad was sentenced to one year's imprisonment under the same law, for a 1999 statement where he referred to "believers and non-believers." His sentence was suspended.

Government authorities do not interfere on matters of doctrine pertaining to minority religions, nor do they restrict the publication or use of religious literature among members of the religion.

The authorities monitor the activities of Eastern Orthodox churches and their affiliated operations. While the Government does not recognize the ecumenical nature of the Greek Orthodox patriarch, it acknowledges him as head of the Turkish Greek Orthodox community and does not interfere with his travels or other ecumenical activities. The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul has sought for years to reopen the



seminary on the island of Halki in the Sea of Marmara. The seminary has been closed since 1971, when the State nationalized all private institutions of higher learning. Under current restrictions, including a citizenship requirement, religious communities remain unable to train new clergy for eventual leadership. Coreligionists from outside the country have been permitted to assume leadership positions.

Religious and moral instruction in public 8-year primary schools is compulsory for Muslims. Upon written verification of their non-Muslim background, minorities "recognized" by the Government to be covered by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish) are exempted by law from Muslim religious instruction. These students may attend courses with parental consent. Other non-Muslim minorities, such as Catholics, Protestants, and Syriac Christians, are not exempted.

In accordance with a 1997 law, which made 8 years of secular education compulsory, new enrollments in the first 8 years of the Islamic imam-Hatip schools (in existence since 1950) were stopped, although children already in those classes were allowed to finish their grades. The imam-Hatip schools were very popular among conservative and Islamist Turks as an alternative to secular public education. Under the law, students may pursue study at Islamic imam-Hatip high schools upon completion of 8 years in the secular public schools. Children already enrolled in the later portion of those classes are allowed to finish their grades. Only the Diyanet is authorized to provide religious training, although some clandestine private religious classes may exist. Students who complete 5 years of primary school may enroll in Diyanet Koran classes on weekends and during summer vacation.

There are legal restrictions against insulting any religion recognized by the State, interfering with that religion's services, or debasing its property.

Under the law, religious services may take place only in designated places of worship. Non-Muslim religious services, especially for religions that do not have the status of "official minorities," often take place in nondesignated places of worship, such as diplomatic property or apartments. The Roman Catholic Church in Ankara, for example, is confined to diplomatic property.

Some religious minority groups have lost property. In October 1999, an Armenian church in Kirikhan, Hatay province, was taken over by the Vakıflar, because its congregation had dwindled to only two persons. The case is under administrative appeal. In addition, bureaucratic procedures and considerations relating to historic preservation at times have impeded repairs to religious facilities. Restoration or construction may be carried out in buildings and monuments considered "ancient" only with authorization of the Regional Board on the Protection of Cultural and National Wealth.

The Baha'i community currently is fighting a legal battle against government expropriation of a sacred Baha'i site near Edirne. The site was granted cultural heritage status in 1993 by Edirne's Board of Natural and Cultural Riches, a branch of the Ministry of Culture. However, in January 2000, the Baha'i community was notified by the Ministry of Education that the property had been expropriated for future use by the adjacent primary school. The Ministry has deposited funds in the Baha'i community's bank account for the expropriated property. The court process is continuing, and the local administration court in Edirne recently rescinded its temporary stay of execution, which technically allows the Ministry of Education to implement expropriation. However, the Baha'i appeal of the expropriation process continues.

Although religious affiliation is listed on national identity cards, there is no official discrimination.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In several incidents over the period covered by this report, police detained or stopped Christians who were holding services in private apartments, and those considered to be proselytizing by handing out literature. In September 1999, police interrupted a service in an Izmir apartment and held 40 Turkish and foreign Christians overnight, apparently after neighbors called the police to complain about an illegal meeting. In another case in March 2000, two Turkish Christians were detained for a month on the charge of "insulting Islam" by distributing Bibles; they were released in May 2000 at their first hearing when witnesses refused to stand by their signed statements. Their trial continues in only one of four jurisdictions where cases were opened.

On May 24, 2000, in Istanbul, several persons were detained overnight following a police raid on a private apartment where a group was holding Protestant services. Most of the participants were released the next day, but may face charges; two persons were held for several days before being released.

The Istanbul State Security Court ordered the confiscation of the June 28 issue of the reportedly anti-Semitic "Akit" and the June 23–29 edition of its related weekly publication "Cuma" for "inciting religious hatred" for its treatment of the death of a prominent secular military official.

Prominent Islamist political leaders, including former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan, have been sentenced to jail for threatening the unity of the State and banned from politics. Erdogan's 10-month sentence was upheld in September 1998, and he was jailed from March to July 1999.

There were no reports of persons who were detained or imprisoned solely for their religious beliefs.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

While the incidents involving Christians brought into focus the lack of full understanding and tolerance of all minority religions, there also were positive developments during the period covered by this report. For the first time, the President issued a Christmas message. A private foundation and the Ministries of Culture and Tourism co-hosted an April 2000 seminar on Abraham at his birthplace in Harran. In May 2000, the Diyanet sponsored two ecumenical events: a seminar on religion and politics in the European Union context and a gathering of religious groups in Tarsus. The latter was attended by representatives of Roman, Armenian, and Syrian Catholic communities; Greek, Armenian, Syrian, and Bulgarian Orthodox communities; and Chaldean and Jewish communities.

In April 2000, a papal representative participated in a ceremony in Antakya organized by the Syriac Christians commemorating the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus's birth. In May 2000, a court victory for the country's small Protestant community allowed a Protestant church in Istanbul to establish itself as a "foundation." Normally all "religious" foundations need to have been in existence since the early days of the Republic in order to be deemed as such. On June 16, 2000, in an unprecedented event, Diyanet leader Mehmet Nuri Yilmaz met at the Vatican with the Pope.

In late 1999, the Vakiflar changed some regulations for minority foundations. These foundations now may hire their own lawyers, rather than having to use those from a special government list, to represent them in dealings with the Government. They also do not have to ask the Vakiflar's permission to conduct repairs/renovations (previously they needed this permission for renovations over \$200,000; however, they still must get permission from the Ministry of Culture and local officials.) In addition, the Government, not the minorities themselves, now pays Vakiflar inspections and oversight fees.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Jews and most Christian denominations freely practice their religions and report little discrimination in daily life. However, some Turks who have converted to Christianity experience harassment from family and neighbors. Proselytizing remains socially unacceptable. While there are no legal prohibitions against religious conversion, individuals contemplating conversion often face family and community pressures. Some members of religious minorities claim that they have limited career prospects in government or military service as a result of their religious affiliation.

Extremist groups or individuals target minority communities from time to time. In 1999–2000 there were 2 reported attacks on Greek Orthodox properties in Istanbul. No perpetrators were arrested or charged in these attacks; or in a 1998 arson attack on the Orthodox shrine, now a museum, at Saint Therapon where the custodian was killed; or in the December 1997 bombing at the Orthodox Patriarchate. Police protection increased after the 1998 attack, and investigations continue. There were no reported attacks on Jewish and other minority groups' properties. In June 2000, 33 persons were convicted and given the death penalty for "trying to change the constitutional regime," for their role in setting a July 1993 fire in which 37 intellectuals (mainly Alawi Muslims) died.

Many religious minority members, along with many in the secular political majority of Muslims, fear the possibility of rising Islamic extremism and the involvement of even moderate Islam in politics. Two Islamist newspapers regularly publish anti-Semitic material.

In January 2000, police raids uncovered the Turkish Hizbullah network of Islamic terrorists. This group is alleged to have killed scores of moderate Islamic imams, businessmen, and political leaders—including a woman known for her untraditional view of women's role in Islam.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Encouraging respect for religious freedom is an integral part of the U.S. Mission's activities. Mission officials, including staff of the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul and the U.S. Consulate in Adana, enjoy close relations with the Diyanet, the Ecumenical Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate, Jewish communities in major cities, and other religious groups. Embassy officers also remain in close contact with local nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) that monitor freedom of religion.

In November 1999, during his visit, President Clinton met briefly in Ankara with the head of the Diyanet and the chief Rabbi of Turkey, and visited the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul. President Clinton also visited "Meryem Ana Evi" (Mary's House) at Ephesus, and met there with the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Izmir.

In December 1999, Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Robert Seiple visited the country. He met with government officials, including the head of the Diyanet; representatives of minority faiths; and human rights NGO's. During his meetings, Ambassador Seiple stressed the importance of respect for the diversity of the country's religions and the need for citizens to be able to practice their faith without undue governmental restrictions.

Embassy and consulate staff members monitor and report on incidents of detention and deportation of foreigners found proselytizing.

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## TURKMENISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and does not establish a state religion; however, the Government severely restricts all religious expression except for the two registered groups, Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians. Unregistered groups are discouraged from holding gatherings, disseminating religious materials or proselytizing, although some unregistered congregations exist.

There was a decline in the Government's overall respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government became more intolerant of religious minorities and increased its interference with their religious observances. However, new procedures ordered by President Saparmurat Niyazov in April 2000, sent to the legislature in May and passed by the Parliament in June limited house searches by Government authorities. Coincident with the proposal and subsequent enactment of the new legislation, reported harassment of religious believers declined.

Beginning in May 1999, the Government began a crackdown on local Christian churches. During the period covered by this report, noncitizen believers were deported, and the Government refused to renew visas for approximately 20 foreigners it accused of being involved in missionary activities. In November 1999, the Government razed a Seventh-Day Adventist church in Ashgabat. In April 2000, the President ordered the implementation of new procedures restricting searches of private homes. The measures were formally incorporated into a draft law in May, and approved by the legislature in June 2000. In parallel, measures were enacted into law restricting the ability of law enforcement authorities to institute criminal proceedings against Turkmen citizens, by requiring permission to do so from commissions formed of local officials and social organizations. The period following these measures reportedly saw a significant reduction of police harassment of some religious believers in their private homes and a reduction of confiscation of religious property. There were reports of several religious detainees and prisoners. There is little or no overt tension among adherents of the various religious groups.

On numerous occasions, officials from the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat and Washington pressed the Government to expand religious freedom, in particular to reduce its burdensome registration requirements for minority religions. The Ambassador offered his residence for use as a place of worship by a Protestant prayer group composed of expatriates who previously used the Seventh-Day Adventist church.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal Policy/Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government imposes severe restrictions on minority religious groups. There is no state religion, but a modest revival of Islam has occurred since independence. The Government has incorporated some aspects of Muslim tradition into its efforts to define a Turkmen identity, and gives some financial and other support for the construction of new mosques to the Council on Religious Affairs. This body plays an intermediary role between the government bureaucracy and registered religious organizations, but does not promote actively inter-faith dialog. The Government pays the salaries of Muslim clerics and during the period covered by this report provided free transportation for as many as 300 citizens to undertake the Hajj to Mecca.

While it affirms a number of important religious freedoms, the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which was amended in 1995 and again in 1996, also provides for significant government control over religion. Religious congregations are required to register with the Government and must have at least 500 citizens over the age of 18 as adherents to be registered. Moreover, the Government applies this 500-member standard on a local and regional basis. For example, a Catholic representative was told in 1998 that his congregation would have to have 500 adherents in Ashgabat to be registered there and another 500 in the city of Turkmenbashi to be registered there. Moreover, since Turkmen names are routinely deleted from lists to prevent discrimination against congregations trying to register ethnic Turkmen, it has proven almost impossible for groups to find 500 non-Turkmen names to register. These stringent registration requirements have prevented all but Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians from setting up legal religious organizations. Although only registered religious congregations legally can hold gatherings, disseminate religious materials, and proselytize, some congregations, including Baptists and Jehovah's Witnesses do manage to meet, and since April 2000 have done so without harassment.

*Religious Demography*

Reliable statistics on religious affiliation are not available, but ethnic Turkmen (77 percent of the population), ethnic Uzbeks (9 percent), and ethnic Kazakhs (2 percent) are nominally Muslim. However, Islam does not play a dominant role in society, in part due to 70 years of Soviet rule and in part because of the pre-Soviet cultural history of the region. Russians constitute about 7 percent of the population, and the remaining 5 percent consist of Armenians, Azeris, and other ethnic groups. Religious believers among the Russians are most likely to be members of the Russian Orthodox Church, but their level of religious observance is uncertain. Some Russians are also Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Baptists. A small community of Baha'is exists. Roman Catholicism is practiced by a small number of persons, predominantly foreigners.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Constitution provides that each person has the right to express and disseminate religious beliefs. However, proselytizing by unregistered (that is, other than Russian Orthodox or Sunni Muslim) religious groups incurs a negative official reaction. Government permission is required for any mass meetings or demonstrations for religious purposes.

Islamic religious literature is available from mosques.

Russian Orthodox Churches offer Christian religious literature.

State-controlled broadcast media do not allow religious broadcasting. Unregistered religious groups face government harassment if they attempt to meet or distribute religious literature. Some minority Christian religious groups in Ashgabat said that since the April 2000 presidential decree restricting searches of private homes, law enforcement officials had not visited the meetings they hold in private homes nor confiscated any of their religious literature.

The Government's restrictive policies toward minority religions have caused problems for a number of them, including the Baha'i Faith, which was registered by the Government in 1994 only to be deregistered in 1997 when the threshold was raised to 500 adherents. Members of the Baha'i Faith have been prevented from conducting services since 1997. The local Baha'i community in Ashgabat was able to conduct a memorial service at a local restaurant in January 2000. In January 1999, the local Armenian community in Turkmenbashi applied to local authorities to use a church appropriated during the Soviet era as a cultural center pending registration as a religious organization, but it did not receive a reply during the period covered by this report. In May 1999, President Niyazov promised to permit registration

of almost all remaining religious groups by September 1999; however, the Government did not take any action during the period covered by this report. No new religious groups were registered and the Halk Mahslahaty (People's Council) did not reduce the 500-person threshold during its December 1999 meeting despite indications by senior officials that it would do so.

There is no formal missionary activity in the country. Beginning in May 1999, the Government began a crackdown on local Christian churches. According to the Brussels-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Human Rights Without Frontiers, in May 1999 government authorities questioned more than 100 citizens about their contacts with foreign-nationality Christians residing in the country. In June 1999, representatives of internal security organizations also visited the Baha'i center and warned its members not to distribute religious materials. In June, July, and August 1999, law enforcement officials harassed congregations of Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Pentecostals, seized religious materials, and instructed the groups to stop their activities in the country. Credible press reports indicate that another series of efforts to intimidate Baptist congregations throughout the country took place in early 2000, including raids of homes and confiscation of religious materials. In March 2000, border officials confiscated religious materials in bulk being brought into the country by a visiting group affiliated with an evangelical Christian organization.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

There were reports of religious detainees and prisoners, and there were some credible reports that some law enforcement officials beat religious detainees or prisoners. In March 1999, Shageldi Atakov, a member of the Baptist faith, was sentenced to 2 years in prison for an alleged illegal transfer of automobiles in 1994. The prosecutor in the case protested the leniency of the decision and in August 1999, Atakov was resented to 4 years in prison and fined \$12,000. Atakov denied the charges and claimed that he was being imprisoned because of his religious beliefs. Atakov reportedly was beaten severely by a law enforcement officer while in prison. According to a foreign evangelical organization, authorities sought to pressure Atakov's wife to convert to Islam. On February 3, 2000, the local Committee of National Security (KNB) chief reportedly expelled Shageldy's wife and children from Mary to Kaakha where they were told not to leave the town. On March 3, 2000, the Government arrested Shageldy's brother Chariyar on unknown charges.

Jehovah's Witnesses living in Gizylarbat also reported that they were beaten severely while in government custody. In June 1999, Yazmammed Annamammedov was arrested and charged with insulting a policeman. While he was being interrogated, local representatives of the KNB beat him. He was tried and sentenced to 12 days' imprisonment. On July 23, 1999, he again was arrested, tried, and sentenced to 10 days' imprisonment. In October 1999, he was arrested and sentenced to 10 days' imprisonment. Upon his release on October 19 he again was asked to renounce his religious beliefs and beaten. According to Jehovah's Witnesses sources, Annamammedov is now serving a 4-year sentence at a prison work camp in Bezmein.

In September 1999, local police and KNB officers in Geokdepe reportedly arrested two Jehovah's Witnesses for discussing the Bible with fellow citizens. After 3 days of interrogation, which reportedly included beatings, the two were sentenced to 15 days' imprisonment. Upon their release, they were told to renounce their faith and warned not to tell human rights organizations about their treatment while in Government custody.

Rahim Tashov, the pastor of an unregistered Baptist congregation in the city of Turkmenabad (formerly Charjou) was arrested twice in October 1999 and fined for holding meetings of an unregistered religious group. He reportedly was beaten while in police custody. Since his arrest the entire congregation has not been able to meet together in one place. Members of the Baha'i Faith have been questioned by internal security representatives for holding private prayer meetings in their homes.

The Government also harassed Pentecostals. On February 4, 2000, law enforcement authorities reportedly beat up the Pastor and confiscated religious materials at a facility in Tejen. On February 6, agents from the KNB broke up a service at a Pentecostal house of worship in Ashgabat and recorded the names of all those present.

During the December 16–17 visit of a Helsinki Commission staff delegation, police arrested two Baptist pastors and orchestrated raids on Baptist churches in Chardjou, Mary, Turkmenbashi, and Ashgabat. In April 2000, President Niyazov ordered that Muslim madrassahs and other religious schools be closed and that only two or three such schools, functioning under the auspices of the government-controlled Muftiyat, be allowed. In March 2000, the Government arrested religious

leader Hoja Ahmed Orazgylychev and tore down an unregistered mosque and religious school run by him and his followers. Orazgylychev subsequently was released and sentenced to internal exile. He earlier had criticized President Niyazov for directing that Turkmen children dance around a Christmas tree during New Year's celebrations.

In December 1999, the Government began deporting foreigners suspected of carrying out missionary activities. In November 1999, the Government arrested Ramil Galimov, a member of a Jehovah's Witnesses group in Gyzylarbat who has dual Russian-Turkmen citizenship. After imprisoning him for 2 weeks, it forced him to board a train to Russia in December 1999 but retained his Turkmen passport. The Government also deported Baptist pastors Vladimir Chernov to Ukraine and Aleksandr Yefremov to Russia in December 1999. Baptist leader Anatoliy Belyaev was arrested in February 2000, and he and his family also were deported to Russia. In March 2000, Yuriy Senkin, Vyacheslav Shulgin, and their families also reportedly were deported. In January 2000, the Government began to refuse to renew residence permits for some 20 westerners that it believed were engaging in proselytizing. This action was a severe blow to the expatriate Ashgabat International Fellowship, and the group now only meets informally in the homes of the remaining members.

In August 1999, the Government demolished a Hare Krishna temple in Mary and deported the director of the Ashgabat temple. In September 1999, representatives of internal security organs, including the KNB, attempted to break up a religious service of the Seventh-Day Adventist congregation in Ashgabat. The congregation later paid a fine for meeting illegally. On November 13, 1999, a demolition team, sent by the Ashgabat mayor's office, began tearing down the recently completed church during a prayer meeting. The building's destruction was part of a government plan to build a new road through the neighborhood, but to date the Seventh-Day Adventist church is the only building in the neighborhood that has been destroyed. The congregation has requested compensation, but the Government, following initial discussions, had not acted on the request by mid-2000.

The Government also restricts the travel of clergy or members of religious groups to the country, although in March 2000, representatives from the Baptist Union in Uzbekistan reportedly were able to visit with Baptist congregations in Ashgabat, Balkanabad (formerly Nebit Dag), Mary, and Turkmenbashi.

In April 2000, President Niyazov appeared on television to announce that he had received numerous complaints from the public about abusive law enforcement practices in people's homes and the confiscation of people's possessions. He is reported to have singled out the names of officials whose offices were responsible for the behavior. Also in April 2000, the President ordered the implementation of new procedures restricting searches of private homes. The measures were formally incorporated into a draft law in May, and approved by the legislature in June 2000. In parallel, measures were enacted into law restricting the ability of law enforcement authorities to institute criminal proceedings against Turkmen citizens, by requiring permission to do so from commissions formed of local officials and social organizations. The period following these measures reportedly saw a significant reduction of police harassment of some religious believers in their private homes and a reduction of confiscation of religious property.

However, despite this positive development, there was a decline in the Government's overall respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government became more intolerant of religious minorities and increased its interference with their religious observances.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is little or no overt tension among adherents of the various religions present in the country. However, there are reports that clerics from the registered religious are sometimes resentful of inroads made by those proselytizing for other, unregistered religions. The government-controlled press has run articles against proselytizing by groups that the authorities perceive as cult-like, such as Jehovah's Witnesses.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

In July 1999, an embassy officer attempted to attend the trial of Shageldy Atakov but was not allowed into the courtroom. In September and December 1999, embassy

officers met with the head of President Niyazov's Institute for Democracy and Human Rights and members of the Council on Religious Affairs to press for reducing the burdensome registration requirements for minority religions. In the course of a discussion with the Foreign Minister on bilateral relations in December 1999, an embassy official raised the issue of religious freedom and prisoners and urged that the latter be included in an upcoming presidential amnesty. U.S. officials repeatedly raised these issues with President Niyazov.

In November 1999, the Ambassador and other officials went to the site of the destruction of the Seventh-Day Adventist church to criticize the Government's decision to tear down the church. They assisted the congregation in removing some of its religious materials from the church for storage elsewhere.

In February 2,000, officials from the U.S. Department of State visited the country and raised issues about religious freedom with government officials. In May 2000, the U.S. Ambassador also raised the burdensome registration requirement with the Deputy Chairman of the Council on Religious Affairs. Also in May, the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Robert Seiple, visited Ashgabat with a staff member and met with members of the religious community and with government officials to discuss religious freedom issues, such as promised changes in the registration law, amnesty of religious prisoners, and recent deportations.

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## UKRAINE

The Constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for the separation of church and state and the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, some religious groups experienced delays in registering.

Virtually all religious organizations must register with the State, a process that is supposed to take only 1 to 3 months but often takes longer. No religious organization was denied registration permanently, although "traditional" religious organizations exerted pressure on local and regional officials not to register nonnative religious organizations.

The Government's respect for religious freedom improved somewhat during the period covered by this report. Some "nontraditional" and minority religious organizations reported that registration was easier than in the previous year. President Leonid Kuchma repeatedly and publicly spoke about the need for peaceful coexistence among ethnic and religious groups. The Government also took steps to return to religious groups properties expropriated during the Soviet era.

Relations among religious denominations in the country are generally amicable, although problems remain in certain areas. There are strains among various traditional Christian denominations, between them and some less traditional groups, and between the Orthodox and Progressive branches of the Jewish community. However, disputes are generally resolved through discussion. Many representatives of religious organizations, although they appreciated the monthly roundtable of religious leaders convened by the State Committee for Religious Affairs, believe that sufficient interconfessional dialog takes place without the assistance of the State Committee. There are some indications of popular suspicion of less traditional religions and foreign missionaries; however, such religions continue to find many converts. Anti-Semitic incidents continue to occur periodically. Cumbersome visa requirements for foreign clergy and other religious workers create hardships for religious groups that make extensive use such workers. The draft law on religion submitted to Parliament in April 1999, which broadens the range of buildings formerly owned by religious organizations that would be subject to restitution to include secular buildings, still had not passed as of mid-2000.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government periodically and has pressed its concerns actively when the occasion has warranted it. The Embassy has intervened as necessary to defend the interests of U.S. citizen missionaries working in the country. The U.S. Government also has been very active in advocating the just restitution of religious property confiscated by the Nazi and Communist regimes. The Embassy places a high priority on monitoring anti-Semitism and maintaining close relations with local Jewish organizations. The embassy human rights officer continuously monitors the status of religious freedom in the country.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The 1996 Constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for separation of church and state and the right to practice the religion of one's choice; the Government generally respects these rights in practice with the exception of some minority and nontraditional religions, which experienced difficulties in registering, buying, or leasing property.

The law requires virtually all religious organizations to register with the state. The agency responsible for interacting with religious organizations and executing state policy on religion is the State Committee for Religious Affairs. This committee has its headquarters in Kiev and maintains branch offices in every regional capital, as well as the cities of Kiev and Sevastopol. The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion requires all religious organizations of more than 10 individuals who have reached 18 years of age to register their articles and statutes as either a local or a national organization in order to obtain the status of a "juridical entity." If a group chooses to register as a national organization, it must register with the central office of the State Committee for Religious Affairs, and each of its local groups must register with the local office of the State Committee in the region where they are located. Those groups that choose to register as local organizations must register only with the local office of the State Committee. This status is necessary to own property or carry out many economic activities, such as publishing religious materials or opening bank accounts. According to the law, this registration process should take not more than 1 month (or 3 months in cases in which either the central or local committee decides that an expert opinion is necessary to determine the legitimacy of a group applying for registration). However, this requirement often is not met. The local offices also supervise the compliance of religious organizations with the provisions of the law.

There was no known instance in which a religious organization was denied registration permanently. Some religious organizations reported that, especially at the local or regional levels, officials of the State Committee refused to register their organizations for protracted periods, thus effectively delaying their activities and limiting freedom of association. However, these groups also reported that registration was easier than in the previous year. Delays in registration sometimes were due to bureaucratic delays and inertia on the part of individual bureaucrats. However, traditional religious organizations, especially the Orthodox Church in central, southern, and eastern regions of the country and the Greek Catholic Church in the west exerted significant political influence at the local and regional levels and pressured local officials not to register nontraditional religious organizations or to allow them to rent or purchase property. Each of the two dominant denominations, within their respective spheres of influence, also reportedly pressured local officials to restrict the activities of the other.

*Religious Demography*

The primary religions practiced in the country are Orthodox Christianity and Greek Catholicism. They nominally represent approximately 85 per cent of the religiously active population. According to the State Committee, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) has 8,590 officially registered parishes. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has 3,350 officially registered parishes. According to the State Committee for Religious Affairs, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate) has 2,565 officially registered parishes, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church has 1,003. Judaism, Roman Catholicism, some evangelical Christian denominations, and Islam also have a firm presence in the country. Evangelical Christian denominations have grown rapidly since independence.

The Orthodox Church, which nominally represents between 60 and 70 percent of the population, is divided into three denominations: The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate), and the much smaller Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was founded in 1918 as a reaction of many Orthodox believers to what they regarded as the Russification of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and to realize their desire to be self-governing (autocephalous). It was abolished by Stalin in 1933 and survived in the western Diaspora until its rebirth in Ukraine in 1989. There are considerable interconfessional disputes among the three Ukrainian Orthodox denominations; however, these disputes generally have remained peaceful.

In 1997 leaders of major religious denominations and churches signed a government-drafted memorandum on the nonviolent resolution of religious disputes. Nonetheless, some problems remain (see Section II).



The central Government generally discouraged anti-Semitism. In 1999 the authorities opened a criminal case against the editor of the Lviv-based newspaper *Idealist* for fomenting interethnic hatred. In addition, the procuracy warned certain publications against publishing anti-Semitic material. However, Jewish representatives complained that some cases were not prosecuted. Representatives of Jewish groups expressed appreciation for state support of Jewish magazines and newspapers, including *Jewish News*, an insert to the weekly *Parliament* newspaper. A book documenting Ukrainian Judaica that was financed primarily by state funds was presented at the May 2000 Cultural Heritage Commission meeting in Kiev. According to Jewish representatives, President Kuchma and other high-ranking officials visit the Babi Yar memorial each year on the anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of Jews. During the period covered by this report, President Kuchma repeatedly and publicly spoke about the need for the peaceful coexistence of ethnic and religious groups. In January 2000, he attended a jubilee service celebrating the 2000th anniversary of Christ's birth at which the heads of all major Christian religions gave speeches. Additionally, on Orthodox Easter, President Kuchma and Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko attended services representing diverse Christian Orthodox denominations, actions which were widely viewed as a sincere effort to foster religious freedom.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic (or Byzantine Rite Catholic, sometimes called "Uniate," a term some Ukrainian Catholics consider derogatory) Church constitutes around 10 percent of the population. It is centered in the west, where the proportion of Greek Catholics is much higher than in the country as a whole. The Greek Catholic Church arose in the 16th century as an attempt to reunify the Catholic and Orthodox Churches under Polish auspices. It is an eastern Byzantine Rite Church that recognizes the authority of the Pope and uses Byzantine church liturgies. Because the Church was introduced to the country in connection with an attempt by local leaders to loosen the influence of Moscow, the Church often is associated with Ukrainian nationalism.

During the period covered by this report, various Jewish representatives estimated the country's Jewish population at between 250,000 and 500,000 persons, of which between 35 and 40 percent are active religiously or communally. The country's Jews have enjoyed increasing opportunities for religious and cultural expression since Ukrainian independence. Although there has been a rebirth of Jewish life, the community continues to be affected by yearly Jewish emigration to Israel of around 25,000 persons, an emigration of 18,000 persons to western countries, and an annual decrease of 16,000 due to negative population growth. Between 1989 and 1997, the Jewish population decreased by 445,000, of whom 223,000 went to Israel. Both Orthodox and Progressive (Reform) Judaism are practiced in the country, although for historical reasons the large majority of religiously active Jews subscribe to Orthodoxy. The number of progressive communities increased from 18 to 24 during the period covered by this report. According to the Kiev Institute of Jewish Studies, in 1999 there were 115 Jewish organizations and religious communities in 62 cities. They publish 30 periodicals and newspapers.

Roman Catholicism is practiced by about 2 percent of the population, for the most part concentrated in the formerly Austro-Hungarian and Polish territories of the west. A papal visit originally planned for the end of 1999 had not taken place as of mid-2000.

Such faiths as Baptists, evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), also have experienced rapid growth since the country's independence and currently also constitute approximately 2 percent of the population.

The Islamic faith is concentrated primarily among the Tatar population of the autonomous republic of Crimea and amounts to 250,000 persons.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government generally permits religious organizations to establish places of worship and to train clergy. The Government continued to take steps to facilitate the allotment of land plots for construction of new houses of worship and to return religious buildings and sites to their former owners. Some groups believe that the pace was adequate while others felt it was too slow.

A 1993 amendment to the 1991 law on freedom of conscience and religion restricts the activities of foreign religious workers in the country. The amendment narrowly defines the permissible activities of foreign members of the clergy, preachers, teachers, and other foreign religious representatives who seek to carry out religious activities in the country. They may preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other canonical activities "only in those religious organizations which invited them to Ukraine and with official approval of the governmental body that registered the

statutes and the articles of the pertinent religious organization.” The Mormons previously had reported difficulty in transferring missionaries between cities; however, during the period covered by this report they reported no such difficulties.

As of May 2000, invitations no longer are required for Ukrainian visa issuance to citizens of Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States. While this greatly simplifies travel to the country for religious tourists, religious workers still must obtain special religious visas that are issued only by invitation from a Ukrainian organization. Both the Mormon Church and the relatively powerful Greek Catholic Church asserted that such invitations were often difficult to obtain and that the decision by the regional offices of the State Committee for Religious Affairs often appeared arbitrary. However, both the Mormon Church and the Baptist Church reported that they are now able to obtain visas for all their religious workers. According to statistics from the State Committee for Religious Affairs, in 1999 the State Committee (including regional departments) issued 11,650 permits to foreigners for religious activities and refused 40 applications. During the first quarter of 2000, the State Committee reported that it issued 4,089 permits and refused 32. According to the State Committee, the refusals were based on a failure to fill out the forms properly. Of the 32 who were refused, none chose to reapply.

Visiting foreign missionaries still must register with the local government within 3 days of arrival, as must all other foreign visitors to the country. Some missionaries found this an unnecessarily burdensome requirement.

In order to promote inter-faith understanding, the State Committee for Religious Affairs formed the Council of Churches in 1996. The Council is a consultative body consisting of the heads of all major religions and denominations, representing over 90 percent of the country’s faithful. The State Committee convenes monthly roundtables with the council as a whole, as well as monthly roundtables with representatives of each of the constituent religions and denominations. However, many representatives of religious organizations believed that this State Committee activity, while generally helpful in facilitating interconfessional dialog, was no longer necessary and was not in accordance with separation of church and state as provided for in the Constitution.

Religious organizations enjoy privileged status over individuals and other nonreligious organizations with regard to property restitution. According to current law, only they are eligible for restitution of property nationalized during the Soviet period. Only churches, synagogues, and religious artifacts immediately necessary for religious services are subject to restitution. Restitution of other forms of property (for example, school buildings and community centers) formerly owned by religious organizations is not regulated by current legislation. Religious buildings and property currently under state ownership may be returned either to exclusive use without charge or to actual ownership by religious organizations.

The decision whether or not to return religious buildings or property is made by the regional administration (or the Kiev or Sevastopol city administrations) in which the building is located. The decision on restitution is to be made by these organs within 1 month of application, and a written notification of the decision is to be provided to the applicant. However, implementation of a 1992 decree on restitution of religious community property seized during the Soviet era remains stalled in many places. In practice it is more common for buildings to be provided for exclusive free use than for an actual transfer of ownership to be permitted. Despite the law’s provision that the decision be made within 1 month, the time period involved is usually considerably longer. Numerous Jewish congregations have negotiated successfully with local authorities for worship space.

While some Jewish community representatives were pleased with progress on restitution, others thought that much more should be done. In August 1999, several Jewish community leaders noted the failure of local authorities to enforce existing decrees and legislation, and the group specifically criticized the local governments in Lviv and Zhytomyr for failing to enforce a presidential decree banning construction on former Jewish cemeteries. The decrease in Jewish population has reduced demand for access to religious space, but progress has been made. For example, a synagogue was returned in Poltava Oblast in the fourth quarter of 1999. In the first quarter of 2000, one synagogue in Kerch and another in Slavuta in Khmelnytskyi oblast were returned. However, some Jewish leaders maintained that they continued to face obstacles in reacquiring community properties confiscated during the Soviet period. Jewish communities claimed that all property so far returned to them had only been for free exclusive use, not transferred to Jewish community ownership. However, the State Committee for Religious Affairs maintains that as of May 2000, 55 synagogues had been transferred to Jewish community ownership, and 22 other buildings had been returned for their exclusive use.

The Jewish communities officially claim approximately 3,000 properties of all types, of which only a minor portion have been restituted. However, since current law only permits restitution of synagogues, the proportion of buildings legally subject to restitution that have been returned is higher than the proportion of the total of all buildings claimed that have been restituted. In addition, the pace of restitution of Christian churches has slowed in recent years, since the buildings that remain in state possession tend to be prime properties currently in use as museums, concert halls, or city halls. The Roman Catholic Church has outstanding claims on approximately 40 buildings across the country that have not been returned, some of which already have been privatized partially. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches also reported problems in obtaining formerly owned properties. These difficulties often are due not only to government bureaucracy, but also to competing claims to the buildings in an economy where resources are scarce for construction of public buildings. Nevertheless, even these two dominant churches have been encountering restitution difficulties, since the remaining buildings in state ownership are more prestigious or income generating.

However, all religions have enjoyed equal opportunity to regain control over former community property. Problems in obtaining restitution result from inadequate legislation, bureaucratic inertia, and the difficulty of locating alternative quarters for current occupants. In 1996 a Kiev arbitration court decided in favor of transferring the title of the former Kiev Central Synagogue, which in Soviet times was used as a puppet theater, to a Chabad Hasidic congregation. The decision set an important precedent for the judiciary's role in religious property restitution. By December 1997, the puppet theater had vacated the building, and in the spring of 1998 the building reopened once again as a synagogue. In March 2000, the synagogue held a rededication ceremony after extensive renovation. The ceremony was attended by Ukrainian and foreign representatives of many religious groups.

A number of religious properties were returned to Christian churches during the period covered by this report. Of the 42 houses of worship returned in the fourth quarter of 1999, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church received 20 buildings. These included four churches of the Assumption Monastery in Donetsk and a church of national architectural importance in Berzhany, Ternopil Oblast. In the first quarter of 2000 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church received 17 buildings. In May 2000, the Kiev Patriarchate received the newly rebuilt, historic St. Michael's Cathedral in Central Kiev. The cathedral, which had been destroyed by Stalin in 1936, was rebuilt with significant local government funding. During the period covered by this report, authorities transferred 16 former cathedrals to the Greek Catholic Church and 5 to Roman Catholic parishes. A Lutheran Church also was returned in Ternopil oblast. However, Christian representatives complained that property generally was returned for exclusive or shared use, rather than for actual ownership.

A May 1998 government resolution committed local regional administrations to pursue the step-by-step restitution of unused or misused places of worship to religious organizations. According to the State Committee for Religious Affairs, a list of such buildings had been compiled, and deadlines and conditions for their return had been set. In July 1998, the Cabinet issued an ordinance prohibiting construction and privatization on previous and current Jewish cemeteries. At a May 2000 meeting in Kiev of the Bilateral Cultural Heritage Commission, Deputy Minister of Culture Leonid Novahatko and U.S. Commissioner Stolberg agreed to cooperate on completing the necessary legislation. However, some construction was reported at the cemetery in Lviv, which was destroyed by the Nazis in World War II and is now the site of the city's central market. The cemetery in Berdychev was returned to the Jewish community early in 1998, and restoration has begun.

In February 1999, President Kuchma instructed the Cabinet and other executive bodies to settle all outstanding church property restitution cases within the current year. This instruction was issued not long after a meeting between the President and representatives of the country's religious communities. However, as of mid-2000, there remained church property restitution cases to be settled. In February 1999, President Kuchma instructed the State Property Fund to take measures to ban the transfer of property formerly owned by religious communities to private (that is, non-Church) owners and to require local authorities to provide land to be used for new churches and cemeteries. Kuchma also ordered the State Customs Committee to streamline procedures for sending humanitarian aid to religious organizations.

A revision of the law on religion was submitted to Parliament by the Government in April 1999. It would broaden the range of buildings formerly owned by religious organizations that would be subject to restitution to include secular buildings once owned by religious organizations. While in several ways an improvement over the existing law (including clarification of the separation of church and state and provi-

sion for conscientious objection), it would maintain registration requirements for religious organizations. As of mid-2000, it remained unclear when this draft would be considered by Parliament.

The Kiev Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church complained of harassment by local authorities in the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern region of the country.

The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church complained of governmental pressure to join either the Kiev or Moscow Patriarchate after the April 2000 death of Patriarch Dmitri. It also reported governmental pressure to choose a Ukrainian successor to Patriarch Dmitri rather than Metropolitan Konstantin, a U.S. citizen.

In early June 2000, there were reports of harassment from a group of four American teachers with religious affiliations hired to teach at a public school in Sevastopol. The teachers initially were hired to teach morality and ethics, but after a change in school administration, their contracts were revised to limit their activities to teaching English. The teachers indicated that they complied with this request. However, Ukrainian colleagues and fellow parishioners subsequently were approached by local authorities and asked to report on the activities of the teachers, in what appeared to be an effort to implicate them in work and visa status irregularities. One report suggested that this monitoring may have been prompted by complaints from the Orthodox Church.

On June 1, 2000, a private prayer meeting hosted by the teachers in their home was broken up by Ukrainians who refused to identify themselves but insisted on checking the passports and visa status of the persons present. The teachers reported that government officials were verbally abusive and that they interrogated the Ukrainians present about the teachers' activities. Subsequently, local authorities searched the school and found religious materials stored by the teachers. Deportation proceedings against the four followed; they were found to have engaged in illegal religious activity incompatible with their visa status. Officials from the State Committee for Religious Affairs indicated that the local officials claimed to have received complaints that the teachers were proselytizing in a public school, in violation of the separation of church and state.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Keston news service reported that members of the Karaite community in Simferopol began to use their historical religious and cultural center during the period covered by this report. The center, Tchufut Kale ("impregnable fortress" in Turkish), is the site of two Karaite kenassas (prayer houses). However, according to this report, which has not been independently verified, representatives of the community have complained that they have to pay to worship there. Tchufut Kale currently is designated a conservation area and is under the control of the Ministry of Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. When the Karaites go there to pray, they have to buy tickets to enter or sometimes have to pray outside until the conservation authorities grant them permission to enter. The Karaite community also pointed out that the buildings and grounds have not been cared for properly by the conservation authorities. Since the community's registration in 1991, it has been trying to reclaim its property seized during the Soviet era, including the two kenassas at Tchufut Kale, through correspondence with the chairman of the committee for religious affairs in the council of ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. There are only about 800 Karaites in Crimea.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

Overall, respect for religious freedom improved somewhat during the period covered by this report. Although problems remained regarding the Government's protection of religious freedom for "nontraditional" religious organizations (defined as all organizations other than Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Jewish), which faced some difficulty in carrying out their activities, they reported less difficulty in obtaining visas and registering during the period covered by the report. Some measures to improve property restitution have been undertaken. The Government took steps to return to religious groups properties expropriated during the Soviet era.

As of May 2000, invitations no longer are required for Ukrainian visa issuance to citizens of Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the United States for tourist and business travel. Although this greatly simplified travel to Ukraine for religious

tourists, religious workers still require invitations from an organization registered in Ukraine.

The Baptist Church reported that it no longer encountered any restrictions on baptizing persons in the Dnipro. A successful Easter service in Kiev drew more than 5,000 persons.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the religions and religious denominations in the country are generally amicable, although problems remain in certain areas.

The ongoing dispute among competing Orthodox Christian administrative bodies claiming to be "the Ukrainian Orthodox Church" remained deadlocked. The disagreements primarily center on the inheritance of property that belonged to the Unified Russian Orthodox Church before independence, the proper language to use in the liturgy (Ukrainian, Russian, or Church Slavonic), and recognition by foreign religious organizations. The Moscow Patriarchate thus far has claimed successfully to be the only legitimate representative of Ukrainian Orthodoxy to foreign religious organizations such as the Vatican, the Constantinople Patriarchate, and the Russian Orthodox Church. The Kiev Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church complains of harassment by local authorities in the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern region of the country, while the Moscow Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church complains that local governments turn a blind eye to the appropriation of their churches by Ukrainian nationalists in the Ukrainian-speaking western region.

The Government has been unable to stop disagreements between Orthodox believers and Greek Catholics in the western part of the country, where the two communities have contentious relations and engage in bitter disputes over church buildings and property in some 300 localities. The number of localities with disputes between the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches has decreased over the last few years. The Greek Catholic Church cooperates with the Roman Catholic Church and with various Jewish groups on humanitarian aid projects.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church assisted Lutheran missionaries with invitations and necessary documentation to work in the country. It also provided invitations to and facilitated visits and meetings for U.S. Jewish leaders. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church assisted the Jewish community in Ukraine and Jewish organizations in the United States in obtaining Torah scrolls in government museums and archives restored to Jewish communities in the country. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church cooperated with the Lviv Jewish community on the distribution of two shipments of medical humanitarian aid from the U.S. Government. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches also work together with Caritas, the international Catholic charity.

Church leaders generally resolve interconfessional disputes through discussion. Many leaders believed that the State Committee for Religious Affairs, although helpful, should be eliminated, since they believe that it represents forced rather than natural cooperation.

There are some indications of popular suspicion of "nonnative" religions and foreign missionaries. There have been occasional statements by Ukrainian Orthodox Church officials (both Moscow and Kiev Patriarchates) denouncing the spread of such religions and sharply criticizing their missionary activities. Popular suspicion has not led to significant public criticism or actions against such religions, which continue to find many converts. However, missionaries reported some instances of societal discrimination against members of their churches, such as salary cuts, layoffs, and public criticism for betraying "native religions."

Anti-Semitism exists on an individual and societal basis. Some ultranationalist groups and newspapers continued to publish and distribute anti-Semitic tracts regularly. Anti-Semitic publications also are imported from Russia and distributed without the necessary state license. In early 1999, the Shimon Dubnov Ukrainian Academy of Jewish History and Culture filed suit against the nationalist newspaper *Vechirny Kiev* for publishing anti-Semitic diatribes about the Academy's collection of scholarly articles, "Judeophobia against Ukraine," which was published in 1998. As of mid-2000, this case still was pending.

Anti-Semitic incidents continue to occur but, according to local Jewish organizations, have declined in number over recent years and were concentrated in western regions of the country.

During the period covered by this report, there were no arrests made in the 1997 firebombing of the Kharkiv Israeli cultural center, nor have there been any prosecutions for the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in 1997.

Tension continued within the Jewish community, focused primarily on which Jewish organization should be recognized as representing the Jewish community in international Jewish forums.

The smaller Progressive Jewish community reported that it was subject to pressure and discrimination from the dominant Orthodox Jewish organizations.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government periodically. The U.S. Government has pressed its concerns actively when the occasion has warranted it. Since most problems related to religious freedom in the country lie in the relationship between foreign missionaries of nontraditional religions and local authorities, and most of the foreign missionaries—approximately 55 percent—working in the country today are U.S. citizens, the Embassy has intervened as necessary to defend their interests. Responding to complaints by American missionaries that Ukrainian embassies and consulates were not issuing religious worker visas, the Embassy's consular section raised the importance of honoring visa reciprocity in several 1999–2000 meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These meetings did not result in tangible improvements in the Government's visa practices toward prospective religious workers; however, the Embassy continues to stress the issue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the consular section repeatedly recommended doing away with the Soviet requirement of an invitation to receive Ukrainian visas. As of May 2000, invitations no longer were required for certain visa categories.

The U.S. Government also has been active in advocating the just restitution of religious property confiscated by the Nazi and Communist regimes. The Embassy's political counselor raised the issue in a February meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ambassador stressed the importance of a transparent and nondiscriminatory process for property restitution at the May 2000 meeting of the joint U.S.-Ukraine Cultural Heritage Commission in Kiev. U.S. Commissioner Stolberg and Deputy Minister of Culture Novohatko agreed to cooperate on drafting legislation that would prohibit construction and privatization on previous and current cemeteries of all religious denominations.

An embassy officer is tasked with monitoring the status of property restitution. This officer has discussed the issue on several occasions with the State Committee for Religious Affairs, with the Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with representatives of religious organizations. In October 1999, National Security Council Director for Russian, Ukrainian, and Eurasian Affairs Tedstrom met with representatives of religious organizations in Kiev to discuss religious freedom and property restitution.

The Embassy places a high priority on monitoring anti-Semitism and maintaining close relations with local Jewish organizations. In August 1999, the Embassy hosted a meeting of Jewish community leaders with Senator Arlen Specter. Two embassy officers and a representative of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom attended the October 1999 induction ceremony of Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny as the progressive rabbi of the country. The political counselor and two political officers attended the March 2000 rededication of the Kiev grand synagogue. The Embassy's human rights officer also holds regular meetings with a variety of Jewish community representatives around the country.

The Embassy closely followed the case of the four American teachers in Sevastopol. The Embassy raised the case with the Foreign Ministry, the State Committee for Religious Affairs, and prosecutorial officials. The Foreign Ministry was helpful and at one point sought to block the deportation decision. The Embassy requested that the Foreign Ministry and the State Committee for Religious Affairs review the handling of this matter to avoid similar problems in the future and to consider lifting the 1-year restriction on the return of the teachers.

The Embassy's human rights officer continuously monitors the status of religious freedom in the country. The officers serving in that position during the period covered by this report regularly met with the State Committee for Religious Affairs and with representatives from all the primary religious groups in the country, not only in Kiev, but in several regional centers as well. They also regularly met with representatives of human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) who deal with issues of religious freedom.

A representative from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom visited Ukraine in October, meeting with representatives of religious organizations, government officials, and embassy staff to promote religious freedom.

In Washington, the Department's Office of International Religious Freedom met with Jewish leaders from Ukraine as well as with Christian clergy.

## UNITED KINGDOM

Government policy provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The 1998 Human Rights Act, which is to enter into force in October 2000, incorporates the principle of religious freedom into law.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. However, centuries-old sectarian divisions—and instances of violence—are part of the troubles in Northern Ireland.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Government policy provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The 1998 Human Rights Act, which is to enter into force in October 2000, provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief.

There are two established (that is state) churches, the Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). The Queen is the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England and must always be a member of the Church and promise to uphold it. The Queen appoints Church of England officials on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Crown Appointments Commission (which includes lay and clergy representatives.) The Church of Scotland appoints its own office bearers, and its affairs are not subject to any civil authority. There are no established churches in Wales or Northern Ireland, but the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church of Ireland are members of the Anglican Communion.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government. No church or religious organization—established or otherwise—receives direct funding from the State. Religious bodies are expected to finance their own activities through endowment, investments, and fund-raising. Since 1977 the Government has appropriated funds for the repair of historic church buildings, such as cathedrals, but such funding is not restricted to Church of England buildings. The Government also contributes 70 percent of the budget of the Redundant Churches Fund, established by the Church of England in 1969 to preserve "redundant" Church of England buildings that are of architectural or historic significance. In 1993 a similar body, the Historic Chapels Trust, was founded with the aid of a grant from the Department of National Heritage to preserve, repair, and maintain non-Anglican houses of worship, such as mosques, temples, or synagogues. No such bodies exist in Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland.

Most religious institutions are classified as charities and, as such, enjoy a wide range of tax benefits. (The advancement of religion is considered to be a charitable purpose.) In England and Wales, the Charity Commission reviews the application of each body applying for registration as a charity. Commissioners base their decisions on a substantial body of case law. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Inland Revenue performs this task. Charities are exempt from taxes on most types of income and capital gains, provided that the charity uses the income or gains for charitable purpose. They are also exempt from the value-added tax. Donors to charities also enjoy tax relief for their donations. Transfers to charities are exempt from the inheritance tax, capital gains tax, and stamp duty.

In November 1999, the Charity Commission rejected a Church of Scientology application for charitable status, concluding that Scientology is not a religion for the purposes of charity law.

Some "voluntary schools" provided by religious groups enjoy state support. While the majority of these schools are Anglican or Catholic, there are a small number of Methodist and Jewish schools. There are also privately funded schools with religious foundations, including a growing number of Muslim schools.

#### *Religious Demography*

There are no official statistics collected on religious beliefs or church membership, except in Northern Ireland. Although their methodologies differ greatly, the num-

bers collected by individual religious communities highlight patterns of adherence and belief.

About 65 percent of the population (estimated to total 58.5 million in 1996) would identify with some form of Christianity. About 45 percent of the population identify with Anglican churches, 10 percent with the Roman Catholic Church, 4 percent with Presbyterian churches, 2 percent with Methodist churches, and 4 percent with other Christian churches, but only about 8.7 percent attend a Christian church on a regular basis. Church attendance in Northern Ireland is estimated at 30 to 35 percent of the population. An additional 2 percent of the population are affiliated with non-Trinitarian churches, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Church of Christ, Christian Scientists, and Unitarians. A further 5 percent of the population are adherents to other faiths, including Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism.

About 28 percent of the population are nonreligious. About half of all parents choose to have their children baptized. A similar proportion of all weddings (41.3 percent) are conducted as religious ceremonies, but the number has decreased in recent years. The vast majority of funerals are religious, and recent surveys suggest that 63 to 70 percent of the population believe in God.

Between the Reformation and the mid-19th century, Britain was a predominantly Protestant country. The Jewish community dates from 1656, with the arrival of Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal, but it experienced much of its growth during the 1800's and 1900's, when Ashkenazic Jews arrived from Eastern Europe. Irish immigration during the 1800's fostered the resurgence of Roman Catholicism, and later immigration from British colonies (and now the Commonwealth) led to the establishment of thriving Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu communities. These latter communities tend to be concentrated around larger cities.

The conflict between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland has been drawn along religious lines, but the avowed policy of the Government remains one of religious neutrality and tolerance (See Section II).

The Government makes an active effort to ensure that public servants are not discriminated against on the basis of religion and strives to accommodate religious practices by government employees whenever possible. For example, the Prison Service permits Muslim employees to take time off during their shifts to pray. It also provides prisoners with Jewish and Muslim chaplains. The military generally provides soldiers who are adherents of minority religions with chaplains of their faith.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) radio station appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 1999 the existing ban on nationwide broadcast licenses for religious broadcasters. The Government filed a counter brief in February 2000; the UCB filed a response in April 2000. The Court is scheduled to hear the case in late 2000 or early 2001. Due to the limited broadcast spectrum, the 1990 Broadcasting Act precludes certain groups, including those "wholly or mainly of a religious nature," from obtaining the few available national licenses. Due to their limited number, digital radio multiplex licenses, provided for in the 1996 Broadcasting Act, also are unavailable to religious groups. Religious groups can and do compete successfully for the more numerous local and regional stations, and cable and satellite channels; they can advertise. The UCB now broadcasts by satellite without restriction.

The Church of Scientology asserts that it faces discrimination due to the failure of the Government to treat Scientology as a religion. In particular Scientology ministers are not regarded as ministers of religion under prison regulations, and thus they are not permitted to provide official pastoral care to prisoners; nor are they considered ministers of religion for the purpose of immigration relations. The Government bases its treatment of Scientology on a 1970 judgment by the Court of Appeal, which held that Scientology chapels did not qualify as places of worship under the Places of Worship Registration Act of 1855.

In November 1999, the Charity Commission, which acts independently of the Government and is accountable to the courts for its decisions, rejected a Church of Scientology application for charitable status, concluding that Scientology is not a religion for the purposes of charity law, as "the core practices of Scientology, being auditing and training, do not constitute worship." It also declared that "Public benefit arising from the practice of Scientology and/or the purposes of the Church of Scientology had not been established."

Religious education in publicly maintained schools is required by law throughout the country. According to the Education Reform Act of 1988, it forms part of the core curriculum for students in England and Wales (the requirements for Scotland



were outlined in the Education Act of 1980.) The shape and content of religious instruction is decided on a local basis. Locally agreed syllabi uses are required to reflect the predominant place of Christianity in religious life, but they must be non-denominational and refrain from attempting to convert pupils. All parents have the right to withdraw a child from religious education, but the schools must approve this request.

In addition schools have to provide a daily act of collective worship. In practice this action is mainly Christian in character, reflecting Christianity's importance in the religious life of the nation. This requirement may be waived if a school's administration deems it inappropriate for some or all of the students. Under some circumstances, non-Christian worship may instead be allowed. Teachers' organizations have criticized school prayer and called for a government review of the practice.

Where a student body is characterized by a substantial population of religious minorities, schools may observe the religious festivals of other faiths. Schools also endeavor to accommodate religious requirements, such as providing halal meat for Muslim children.

In general membership in a given religious group does not confer a political or economic advantage on individual adherents. However, on the national level, the House of Lords provides an exception to this rule. The Anglican Archbishops of York and Canterbury; the Bishops of Durham, London, and Winchester; and 21 other bishops, in order of seniority, receive automatic membership in the House of Lords, whereas prominent clergy from other denominations or religions are not afforded this privilege. In January 2000, the Wakeham Report on the Reform of the House of Lords recommended that other Christian denominations and other faiths also should be represented in the House of Lords. The report recommended that there be 16 seats for the Church of England, 5 seats for other Christian denominations, and at least 5 seats for non-Christian faiths. House of Lords reform still is being debated vigorously, and no final decision has been made.

While it is not enforced and is essentially a legal anachronism, blasphemy against Anglican doctrine remains technically illegal. Several religious organizations, in association with the Commission for Racial Equality, are attempting to abolish the law or broaden its protection to include all faiths. Responding to a parliamentary question on removing blasphemy from the statute book, the Home Office stated in July 1998 that there were no current plans to change the law.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable.

While the troubles in Northern Ireland are the product of political, economic, and social factors, conflict between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland is rooted in centuries-old sectarian divisions between the Protestant and Catholic communities.

The majority of citizens in Northern Ireland appear determined to diminish sectarian tensions and continue to support the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which aims to create a lasting settlement to the conflict in Northern Ireland and a society based on equality of opportunity and human rights.

Employment discrimination on religious grounds is proscribed specifically by law in Northern Ireland, although not in the rest of the country. Those who believe that their freedom of religion has been infringed have the right to appeal to the courts for relief. The 1998 Human Rights Act, which is to enter into force in 2000, prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion.

Government programs and continued economic growth in the region have resulted in a decrease in the overall unemployment rate (6.3 percent as of March 2000). Although there is some evidence that unemployment rates among Catholics remain higher than among Protestants, the often-quoted figure, based on 1991 data, that Catholic male unemployment is twice the rate of Protestant male unemployment, has not been updated reliably.

In August 1999, in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement, the Government appointed 20 members to the board of the Equality Commission, an amalgamation of the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities

Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, and the Disability Council. The Commission assumed its responsibilities in October 1999.

One of the Commission's mandates is to help enforce the Fair Employment and Treatment Order of 1998, which incorporates previous equality legislation and outlaws discrimination based on religion or political opinion in the workplace, and aids in access to goods, facilities, services, and premises. Under the order, all public sector employers and all private firms with more than 10 employees must report annually to the Equality Commission on the religious composition of their work forces and must review their employment practices at least once every 3 years.

In addition Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act stipulates that all public authorities (for example, Northern Ireland Office government departments, district councils, and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, among others) must show due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, including between persons of different religious beliefs. Each public authority must submit a plan to the Equality Commission outlining how it plans to promote equality within its organization. The Equality Commission is to review such plans every 5 years.

Unlike the Northern Ireland Office (comprising province-wide government departments and the Northern Ireland civil service) and district councils, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), Northern Ireland's police force, currently is not required to conform to Section 75. Although Catholics now comprise less than 8 percent of the police force, the implementation of the recommendations of the Patten Commission report on police reform, scheduled for late 2000, is expected to initiate measures intended to make the force more broadly accepted in Northern Ireland. These include the establishment of an independent recruitment agency and a recruitment policy mandating equal intake of qualified Catholics and non-Catholics. The Patten Commission projected that, following implementation of these reforms, Catholics, who comprise approximately 40 percent of the population, would make up 30 percent of the police force within 10 years. Reaching this goal in part depends on the Catholic community's encouragement of its members to apply for the police force.

The Northern Ireland Office reported 80 attacks against both Catholic and Protestant churches, schools, and meeting halls from January 1999 through mid-May 2000. Such sectarian violence often coincides with heightened tensions, especially in spring and summer, surrounding certain marches by the "Loyal Institutions" (the Royal Black Preceptory, Orange Order, and Apprentice Boys), whose membership is almost exclusively Protestant.

In April 2000, an interim report on religious discrimination commissioned by the Home Office claimed that the establishment of the Church of England causes "religious disadvantage" to other faiths and Christian denominations. The Home Office is considering the report.

Members of the public have raised concerns with the Home Office regarding the Church of Scientology, particularly about financial demands made on church members, alienation of members from their families, and harassment of members who have left the church.

According to the Community Security Trust, the number of anti-Semitic incidents during 1999 was 412, compared with 385 in 1998. Public manifestations of anti-Semitism are confined largely to the political fringe, either far right or Islamist.

The country has both active inter-faith and ecumenical movements. The Council of Christians and Jews was founded in 1942 to promote Christian-Jewish understanding. It continues its work to advance better relations between the two religions and to combat anti-Semitism. In the postwar period, as other religious communities arose in Britain, new inter-faith organizations evolved. The Inter-faith Network was established in 1987 and links a wide range of religious and educational organizations with an interest in inter-faith relations, including the national representative bodies of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities. The newest vehicle for the promotion of inter-faith cooperation is the Inner Cities Religious Council, which has helped to encourage inter-faith activity through regional conferences and support for local initiatives.

The main ecumenical body is the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland. The Council serves as the main forum for interchurch cooperation and collaboration. Interchurch cooperation is not limited to dealings among denominations at the national level. At the local level, for example, local Anglican parishes may share their church with Roman Catholic congregations.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. In Northern Ireland, longstanding issues related to religion have been part of the political and economic struggle large-

ly between Protestant and Catholic communities. As an active participant in the peace process, the U.S. Government has supported efforts to diminish sectarian tension and promote dialog between the two largest religious communities.

## UZBEKISTAN

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom improved with regard to minority religions, including Christians; however, its respect for the rights of unauthorized Muslim groups worsened, as its harsh campaign against such groups, which it perceives as terrorist security threats, intensified. In August 1999, the Government made a concerted effort to improve respect for the religious freedom of Christians and members of other minority confessions. The President pardoned six Christians who had been imprisoned, some on fabricated narcotics charges, because of their religious activities. In addition, the Government registered 20 churches whose applications had been blocked by local officials.

The Government arrested hundreds of alleged members of unauthorized Islamic groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, and sentenced them to lengthy jail terms. It also imprisoned dozens of Muslims suspected of being "Wahabbist," a term used loosely to encompass both suspected terrorists and any former students of certain independent imams or foreign madrassas (Islamic schools). (As of mid-2000, certain Islamic extremist groups were conducting significant armed incursions in Uzbekistan and neighboring states. The publicly acknowledged aim of this campaign, which includes violent terrorist actions, bombings, and killings, is the overthrow of the Government of Uzbekistan by force.) The number of Muslim prisoners, the severity of court sentences, and the number of deaths from mistreatment in custody all increased. There are amicable relations among the various religious communities.

U.S. officials, both in Washington and in Tashkent, repeatedly urged the Government to improve respect for religious freedom. A series of visits by high-level State Department officials, including Secretary of State Albright in April 2000, emphasized this point to the Government. Other visitors during the period covered by this report included staff members of the U.S. Congress Helsinki Commission, the Secretary of State, the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Robert Seiple, and other State Department officials. The Embassy conducted regular meetings of the U.S.-Uzbek Human Rights Working Group, which addressed questions of religious freedom.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and for the principle of separation of church and state; however, in practice the Government only partially respects these rights. The Government perceives unofficial Islamic groups or mosques as extremist security threats and outlaws them. The Government permits persons affiliated with mainstream religions, including approved Muslim groups, Jewish groups, the Russian Orthodox Church, and various other denominations, such as Catholics and Lutherans, to worship freely and generally registers more recently arrived religions. However, the religion law forbids or severely restricts activities such as proselytizing and importing and disseminating religious literature.

The Government is secular and there is no official state religion. Although the laws treat all religious confessions equally, the Government shows its support for the country's Muslim heritage by funding an Islamic university and subsidizing citizens' participation in the Hajj. The Government promotes a moderate version of Islam through the control and financing of the Spiritual Directorate for Muslims (the Muftiate), which in turn controls the Islamic hierarchy, the content of imams' sermons, and the volume and substance of published Islamic materials.

In May 1998, the Parliament passed two laws that restrict religious activity. The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations provides for freedom of worship, freedom from religious persecution, separation of church and state, and the right to establish schools and train clergy. However, the law also severely limits religious activity. It restricts religious rights that are judged to be in conflict with national security, prohibits proselytizing, bans religious subjects in schools, prohibits private teaching of religious principles, forbids the wearing of religious clothing in public by anyone other than clerics, and requires religious groups to obtain a license to publish or distribute materials.

The law also requires that all religious groups and congregations register and provides strict and burdensome criteria for their registration. In particular it stipulates that each group present a list of at least 100 Uzbek citizen members (compared with the previous minimum of 10) to the local branches of the Ministry of Justice. This provision enables the Government to ban any group simply by denying its registration petition. Government officials designed the law to target Muslims who worship outside the system of state-organized mosques. Although the Government has granted some exemptions to the 100-member requirement, there are no formal criteria for receiving exemptions. Instead, exemptions are granted arbitrarily. To register, groups must report in their charter a valid juridical address. Local officials on occasion have denied approval of a juridical address in order to prevent churches from registering.

As of May 1, 2000, the Government had registered 1,894 religious congregations and organizations, 1,724 of which were Muslim. An additional 335 applications were denied, 323 of which were from Muslim groups. The number of mosques has increased significantly from the 80 or so permitted during the Soviet era, but has decreased from the 4,000 or more that opened after the country gained independence and before registration procedures were in place. Some groups with too few members have reported that they prefer not to bring themselves to the attention of the authorities by submitting a registration application that does not, on its face, meet legal requirements.

A special commission created in August 1998 may grant exemptions to the religious law's strict requirements and register groups that have not been registered by local officials. The commission has granted exemptions to 51 such groups, including congregations with fewer than 100 Uzbek members. However, no formal procedures or criteria have been established to bring a case before this commission.

Although authorities generally tolerate Christian groups, some churches found it difficult to obtain registration, especially before August 1999. In that month, the central Government undertook to register minority religious groups whose applications had been blocked by recalcitrant local officials. Twenty churches received their registration right away, and most new applications since that time have been approved. While there were several groups whose recent applications had not been approved by June 2000, only a Baptist congregation in Gazalkent claimed that officials were blocking its registration. The deputy mayor of Gazalkent allegedly told church leaders that its application might be approved if it removed from its membership list all names of ethnic Uzbek origin.

Some churches, particularly those with ethnic Uzbek members, have not submitted registration applications because they know they are unable to comply with the law's requirements. Although church leaders cite high registration fees and the 100-member rule as obstacles, the most frequent problem is the lack of an approved legal address, which is required in order to submit an application. Some groups have been reluctant to invest in the purchase of a property without assurance that the registration would be approved. Others claim that local officials arbitrarily withhold approval of the addresses because they oppose the existence of Christian churches with ethnic Uzbek members.

The Committee on Religious Affairs has approved the registration of 170 minority religious groups including 47 Korean Christian, 32 Russian Orthodox, 27 Pentecostal ("full gospel"), 23 Baptist, 10 Seventh-Day Adventist, 8 Jewish (1 Ashkenazy, 6 Bukharan, 1 mixed), 5 Baha'i, 4 Lutheran, 3 Roman Catholic, 2 Jehovah's Witnesses, and 2 Krishna Consciousness groups. Several of these congregations had fewer than the required 100 members but received exemptions from the requirement. Denis Podorozhny's Word of Faith Pentecostal Church near Tashkent, which lost its registration in 1998, was reregistered in September 1999. As of June 30, 2000, there was only one pending application by Jehovah's Witnesses. Government officials stated that many of the unregistered groups could not meet the requirement of 100 Uzbek members. Although another unregistered group, the Reformed Baptists, had refused to register as a matter of religious principle, the Committee on Religious Affairs subsequently took steps to ensure that such Baptist congregations meet undisturbed for worship.

The second legislative change enacted in May 1998 consisted of a series of revisions to the Criminal and Civil codes that stiffened the penalties for violating the religion law and other statutes on religious activities. It provided for punishments for activities such as organizing a banned religious group, persuading others to join such a group, and drawing minors into a religious organization without the permission of their parents.

The Criminal Code was amended again in May 1999 with two changes that affected religious freedom. The changes draw a distinction between "illegal" groups, which are those that are not registered properly, and "prohibited" groups, which are

banned altogether. The first measure makes it a criminal offense punishable by up to 5 years in prison to organize an illegal religious group or to resume the activities of such a group (presumably after being denied registration or ordered to disband). Furthermore, the measure punishes any participation in such a group by up to 3 years in prison. The second measure sets out stiff penalties of up to 20 years in prison and confiscation of property for “organizing or participating” in the activities of religious extremist, fundamentalist, separatist, or other prohibited groups. In practice, the courts ignore the theoretical distinction and frequently convict members of disapproved Muslim groups under both statutes.

#### *Religious Demography*

Since 1991 when the country gained independence from the Soviet Union, there has been a resurgence, particularly in the Fergana valley, of the Sunni variety of Islam traditional in the region. There are no official statistics on membership in various faiths, but 80 to 85 percent of the population are nominally Muslim. Another 10 to 15 percent are nominally Russian Orthodox. Only a small portion of members of these two leading faiths actually practices, although the numbers who do so are growing. Because of the decades of Soviet rule, Islam was not previously an important factor in the lives of most citizens.

There are roughly 30,000 Ashkenazy and Bukharan Jews, concentrated in the main cities of Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand. Almost 70,000 have emigrated to Israel or the United States since independence. The remaining 5 to 10 percent of the population include small communities of Korean Christians, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Seventh-Day Adventists, evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, Buddhists, Baha'is, and Hare Krishnas.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious freedom*

Although there were no new restrictive policies, there were serious governmental restrictions on religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government deprived some politically oriented religious groups of their right to exist, restricted many religious practices and activities, and punished citizens for their religious beliefs. Russians, Jews, and foreigners generally enjoy greater religious freedom than traditionally Muslim ethnic groups, especially Uzbeks. Christian churches generally are tolerated as long as they do not attempt to win converts among ethnic Uzbeks. Christians who are ethnic Uzbeks are secretive about their faith and rarely attempt to register their organizations. Christian congregations that are of mixed ethnic background are reluctant to list their Uzbek members on registration lists for fear of incurring official displeasure.

While supportive of moderate Muslims, the Government is intolerant of Islamic groups that attempt to operate outside the state-run Muslim hierarchy. The Government controls the content of imams' sermons and the volume and substance of published Islamic materials. At the beginning of 1998, the Government ordered the removal of loudspeakers from mosques in order to prevent the amplified public announcement of calls to prayer. The Government permanently closed several hundred unauthorized mosques during 1998. Authorities suspect Muslims who meet privately to pray or study Islam of being extremists, and such believers are at risk of arrest.

The Government is determined to prevent the spread of ultraconservative or extremist varieties of Sunni Islam, which it labels “Wahabbism” and considers a security threat. President Islam Karimov frequently has declared the Government's intention to rid the country of Wahhabists and underground Islamic groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Government considers these groups to be political and security threats and represses them severely. Hizb ut-Tahrir members desire an Islamic government and the group's literature includes much anti-western, anti-Semitic, and anti-democratic rhetoric, but they deny that they advocate violence. Some independent Muslims deny that they are extremists and claim that they are being persecuted for their religious beliefs.

There are numerous reports that Muslims in places of detention are punished severely if they are caught praying. The Koran reportedly is banned in most facilities.

The Government bans the teaching of religious subjects in schools, and also prohibits the private teaching of religious principles. Under the laws dealing with religion, only registered central offices of religious organizations are permitted to produce and distribute religious literature. Six such offices have been registered to date: a non-denominational Bible society, as well as Islamic, Russian Orthodox, Full Gospel, Baptist, and Roman Catholic offices. However, the Government discourages and occasionally has blocked even registered central offices from producing or importing Christian literature in the Uzbek language even though Bibles in many other languages are available in Tashkent bookstores.

Although authorities tolerate the existence of many Christian evangelical groups, they enforce the law's ban on proselytizing. The Government often monitors and harasses those that openly try to convert Muslims to Christianity. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses claim that they are subject routinely to police questioning, searches, and arbitrary fines. Several churches, including the Baptist church in Gazalkent, have reported that local officials did not accept membership lists that included Uzbek names.

In May 2000, authorities denied the Union of Baptists permission to hold a religious summer camp for the children of church members.

In 1999 the international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Human Rights Watch compiled a list of 28 confirmed cases from 1997 and 1998 in which university and secondary school students were expelled for wearing religious dress. (Only clerics may wear religious clothing in public.) Several of these students from Tashkent's Oriental Studies Institute brought suit in civil court to be reinstated but were unsuccessful.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government continued to commit numerous serious abuses of religious freedom. The Government deprived some groups of their right to exist, restricted many religious practices and activities, and punished citizens for their religious beliefs. The Government's most serious abuses of the right to religious freedom were committed against Muslim believers. The Government's campaign against independent Muslim groups, begun in the early 1990's, resulted in numerous serious human rights abuses during the period covered by this report. The campaign has been directed at three types of Muslims: alleged Wahhabists, including those educated at madrassas (schools) abroad and followers of missing imams Nazarov of Tashkent and Mirzaev of Andijon; those suspected of being involved in the 1999 Tashkent bombings or of being involved with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, whose roots are in Namangan; and suspected members of Hizb ut-Tahrir throughout the country.

The line between the so-called Wahhabists and those suspected of being involved in the 1999 bombings is not always apparent, even to an unbiased observer, and the Government sees them as being closely connected even when they are not in a given case. Both stem from the growth of independent Islam that the Government has sought to suppress since the early 1990's. The distinction is that the Government considers the Wahhabists to be extremists and potential terrorists and those suspected of involvement in the bombings to be active terrorists.

The Government does not consider repression of these groups to be a matter of religious freedom, but instead to be directed against those who oppose the political order. However, authorities are highly suspicious of those who are more pious than is the norm, including frequent mosque attendees, bearded men, and veiled women. In practice this approach results in abuses against many devout Muslims for their religious beliefs.

There were credible reports that police mistreatment resulted in the deaths of persons in custody. Law enforcement officials regularly beat and torture suspects held in pretrial detention—including those accused of religious extremism—in order to extract confessions. Severe mistreatment of convicted prisoners is also common. According to human rights activists and other observers, many of those killed in custody were interned at a new prison near Jaslik in Karakalpakstan, where conditions are known to be extremely harsh. Nearly all the inmates of this facility, which opened in the spring of 1999, were accused of religious extremism. Although there is specific information available on only a handful of deaths from mistreatment in custody, human rights observers claim that the number of such cases throughout the country during the period covered by this report reached at least several dozen. Law enforcement officials have been known to threaten families not to talk about their relatives' deaths. Government officials acknowledge that some inmates of Jaslik died, but attribute the deaths to illness and the extremely hot climate rather than mistreatment.

According to a Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflet, on July 4, 1999, the parents of 23-year-old Ulugbek Anvarov buried their son, who authorities claimed had committed suicide in detention at the end of June. Anvarov was a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir awaiting trial after his June 23, 1999, arrest for possessing leaflets. Witnesses to the burial claimed that, in addition to rope marks on his neck, his skull was crushed and his body showed clear signs of torture.

Azimboy Khodjaev died in the Jaslik prison in Karakalpakstan on July 2, 1999. Khodjaev allegedly was imprisoned for not revealing to police the whereabouts of his two sons, both sought as wahhabist extremists. According to eyewitnesses, Khodjaev's body showed signs of severe beatings, although the official cause of death

was an unspecified stomach ailment. Khodjaev's son, Pavlanozar, later was arrested in Russia and extradited to Uzbekistan. He was sentenced to death in mid-May 2000 for his alleged involvement in an Islamist terrorist conspiracy.

On July 17, 1999, according to the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, Jurakhon Azimov died while serving a 16-year sentence at the Jaslik prison. Azimov's body allegedly was bruised badly and cut with razor blades, although officials claimed that he died of a heart attack. Azimov, a 34-year-old leader of the Birlik Democratic Movement, was arrested after police allegedly planted narcotics, bullets, and Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets on him.

Jaloliddin Sodiqjonov, a 45-year-old "Islamic missionary," allegedly died from mistreatment in jail on or about October 13, 1999, according to the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan. Sodiqjonov had been arrested in March after police allegedly planted narcotics and a weapon in his pocket.

According to the World Organization Against Torture, Rustam Norbaev, a possible member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, was arrested on March 13, 2000, and died in pretrial detention in Yakkabaga on March 18, allegedly after being tortured. Officials claimed that Norbaev hanged himself.

Negmat Karimov, who was sentenced in July 1999 to 20 years in prison for alleged involvement in the terrorist conspiracy behind the 1999 Tashkent bombings, died in prison in Navoi on March 22, 2000. According to his parents, his body showed multiple signs of beating. Karimov also was convicted on charges related to religious extremism.

Shukhrat Parpiev, who was sentenced in December 1998 to 15 years in prison, died in the Jaslik prison on May 5, 2000. According to an acquaintance, Parpiev was not religious, but had been arrested because he was seen with a known religious figure suspected of extremism. Parpiev's body allegedly was bruised badly, and had a broken clavicle, crushed skull, and broken ribs.

There were no new reports of disappearances of religious leaders. It is now widely believed that Imam Sbidkhon Nazarov, who has been missing since March 5, 1998, fled the country to avoid arrest and was not abducted by security forces. There were no reported developments in the 1995 disappearance of Imam Abduvali Mirzaev, the 1997 disappearance of his assistant, Nematjon Parpiev, or the 1992 disappearance of Aboullah Utaev, leader of the Uzbekistan chapter of the outlawed Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). Most independent observers believe that the three missing Islamic activists are either dead or in custody.

On September 27, 1999, government agents abducted Kyrgyz citizen Uuldashbay Tursunbaev on Kyrgyz territory. They brought him to Tashkent, where he stood trial for being one of the leaders of the Wahhabist movement throughout the 1990's. He was sentenced in February 2000 to 20 years in prison.

The security services have arrested, detained, and harassed Muslim leaders for perceived acts of insubordination and independence. Although international observers are not permitted to inspect prisons, conditions are said to be inhuman for all varieties of prisoners.

Arbitrary arrest and detention of Muslim believers is commonplace. Following both the December 1997 murder of police officials in Namangan and the February 1999 terrorist bombings in Tashkent, police detained hundreds and perhaps thousands of suspected Wahhabists. The majority of those detained were released after questioning and detention that lasted as long as 2 months. The police routinely planted narcotics, ammunition, and, beginning in 1999, religious leaflets, on citizens to justify their arrest. According to human rights activists, the police arrested scores of those whose religious piety, sometimes indicated by their dress or by wearing beards, made them suspect in the eyes of the security services.

To determine whom to arrest, the Government used the local mahalla (neighborhood) committees as a source of information. Shortly after the February 1999 Tashkent bombings, President Karimov directed that each committee assign a "defender of the people," whose job it was to assure that young persons in the neighborhoods were not joining independent Islamic groups. The committees identified for police those residents who appeared suspicious. Human rights observers noted that in practice the committees often saw as suspicious those same individuals who already had been detained by the police in the wake of either the 1997 murders of officials in Namangan or the Tashkent bombings, and who subsequently had been released because there was no case against them. There were dozens of cases involving people who had previously been detained and released being retried during the period covered by this report.

The absence of a free press and the rarity of public trials make it impossible to determine how many persons have been incarcerated. Nonetheless, the Moscow human rights center, Memorial, has compiled a list of over 1,400 names of persons arrested and convicted for political and religious reasons from January 1999 to April

2000. The number of those in pretrial detention is unknown but is probably several hundred. Nearly all those listed were accused of being Muslim extremists. Some human rights groups have speculated that the total of those in custody is in the tens of thousands. By the end of June 2000, the Government had convicted 128 persons for direct involvement in the bombing plot. Of these, at least 18 received death sentences.

Although the Constitution provides for the presumption of innocence, the system of justice operates on the assumption that only the guilty are brought to trial. To bolster this claim, government officials point out that since the bombings, approximately 5,000 persons who were detained later were released. According to government officials, most of these were released after they renounced their allegiance to Islamist groups and pledged never again to engage in anti-state activities, while others were released for lack of evidence.

The Government typically held unannounced trials of large groups of the alleged extremists, and rarely let international observers attend. Human rights observers contended these groupings of defendants were arbitrary, since the prosecution only occasionally argued that those on trial were actually connected to one another. Defendants often claimed that the confessions on which the prosecution typically based its cases were extracted by torture. Judges ignored these claims and invariably convicted the accused, handing down severe sentences—usually from 15 to 20 years imprisonment.

In one such trial that ended on April 14, 2000 in Tashkent, 12 defendants were convicted of anti-state activity, belonging to illegal groups, and other charges. Two of the defendants were sentenced to 20 years, and eight more to 17 years. One defendant, Abdulaziz Mavlianov, an employee of the Tashkent office of the International Committee for the Red Cross, allegedly confessed only to having given about \$15 (10,000 soum) and some publicly available information to the main defendant, alleged Islamist activist Toirjon Abdusamatov. At his trial, Mavlianov renounced even that confession, which he had never signed. Despite the nature of the alleged activities that led to his conviction, he was sentenced to 17 years in prison.

Accused Hizb ut-Tahrir members also were tried in large groups, claimed mistreatment, and were sentenced to lengthy jail terms. In a closed April 2000 trial in Termez, 48 defendants were tried together. The defendants included both alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members and alleged Wahhabists. According to observers at the courthouse, the judge appointed the police investigator who developed the case against six of the defendants as their defense counsel. In a Tashkent trial of 10 alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members in April 2000, all were sentenced to 20 years in prison, although the prosecution asked for lighter sentences. Most accused Hizb ut-Tahrir members have acknowledged membership in the group but claim that they believe in peaceful change. Others appear not to be members of the group but to have been apprehended because of their religious piety or their possession of Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets. While the Government has not charged that Hizb ut-Tahrir was involved in the bombings, group members usually are accused of acting to overthrow the constitutional order and of belonging to a prohibited extremist group.

Abdurakhim Abdurakhmanov, an independent Tashkent imam and follower of Imam Nazarov, was arrested on or about April 27, 2000. The Government held him incommunicado and did not inform his family of his whereabouts. Abdurakhmanov had been fired from his job as leader of the Kokoldash Madrassa in 1996 and was arrested, severely beaten, and imprisoned briefly in 1998 after police claimed to have found narcotics and a false passport on him. After the recent arrest, officials questioned his wife and sister-in-law, accusing them of Wahhabism.

Authorities continued their persecution of relatives of Imam Abid Khon Nazarov. All of Nazarov's close male relatives have been imprisoned. His youngest brother, who has been imprisoned since 1998, was transferred to Jaslik prison during 1999. Relatives who have visited him there report that he was bruised and malnourished. Nazarov's brother, Umarkhon Nazarov, his uncle, Ahmadali Salomov, and his brother-in-law, Abdurashid Nasetdinov, remain in prison following their convictions in May 1999. On February 10 and February 17, 2000, Nazarov's wife and mother were forced to attend anti-Nazarov rallies staged by local (mahalla) authorities. Speakers from the procuracy, mayor's office (hokimiat), police, and the official Muftiate, addressed assemblies of up to 300 persons, calling Nazarov an enemy of the people. Police keep constant surveillance on the Nazarov household and have attempted to recruit dozens of neighbors as informants regarding the family's activities.

There were few reports of human rights abuses against members of minority religions during the period covered by this report. The major exception was the October 1999 incident in Karshi in which police beat and tortured several churchgoers.

An ethnic Korean Christian pastor, Stanislav Kim, who was jailed in February 1999, allegedly was beaten on one occasion during the period covered by this report.



An acquaintance claimed that Kim was convicted on false charges of tax evasion and financial impropriety, in part because local officials believed that Kim's religious activities conflicted with his duties as director of a state concern. Prison officials said that Kim was considered a model prisoner, denied he was in any way mistreated, and suggested that he may have been beaten by other inmates.

The authorities have attempted to silence human rights activists who criticize government repression of religious Muslims and others. In a 3-hour trial on July 13, 1999, a Tashkent court sentenced Mahbuba Kasimova, a member of the Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (IHROU) and of the Birlik Democratic Movement to 5 years in prison. On May 12, 1999, police had arrested her houseguest, Ravshan Hamidov, who was suspected of religious extremism. During their search of Hamidov's belongings in Kasimova's house, police allegedly planted narcotics, a grenade, and literature linking Hamidov to the Islom Lashkarlari religious extremist organization. Kasimova was convicted of harboring a criminal, despite the fact that her husband was the owner of the house and that Hamidov had not been accused of a crime prior to the search (and thus technically could not be considered a criminal). The prosecutor argued that Kasimova must have known that Hamidov was wanted by police, although his arrest was not based on a previous arrest warrant but on the discovery of contraband. Kasimova also was convicted of fraud, for not having repaid a debt to a neighbor, although the neighbor insisted in court that she did not want to press charges.

Kasimova was denied the right to hire her own counsel for the trial. Officials ignored the presumption of innocence in handling her case. Prior to the trial, investigators organized a citizens' assembly headed by the deputy hokim (mayor) of Tashkent, Shukrat Jalilov, at which Kasimova was accused falsely of supporting religious extremists and advocating the creation of an Islamic state. In front of relatives of victims of the February 1999 bombings, she was accused of moral complicity in the deaths of those victims.

Newspaper, television, and radio coverage of the event echoed the accusations. On August 17, after a 45-minute appeal hearing, the judge confirmed the original sentence.

On July 10, 1999, police took into custody IHROU member Ismail Adylov and held him incommunicado for 72 hours before confirming his whereabouts to his family. Police allegedly planted 100 Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets among his effects to justify the arrest, although Adylov is known not to be religious. On September 29, 1999, a remote regional court sentenced Adylov, who has a kidney ailment, to 6 years in prison for allegedly possessing incriminating papers. Reporters and the defendant's family were not allowed to attend the 2-day trial; his appeal was denied on October 26, 1999.

Despite repeated appeals, authorities did not return property, including a passport, seized from IHROU head Mikhail Ardzinov on June 25, 1999. Ardzinov has alleged that the police beat him twice during questioning on that date. Although the Government denies beating Ardzinov, a reliable medical expert confirmed that he was beaten severely.

The Government is suspicious of all religious literature that does not emanate from the Muftiate. Possession of tracts by authors deemed to be Wahhabist can lead to arrest and prosecution. Hundreds of Uzbeks have been imprisoned for possessing or distributing Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets, which are both political and religious in content. Others have been imprisoned for possessing Islamic texts in Arabic. One ethnic Uzbek Christian was detained by police for 12 hours after they discovered a copy of the New Testament in the Uzbek language.

The law treats prayer meetings or services by unregistered groups as a criminal activity. On October 10, 1999, the police raided the annual harvest celebration at a Baptist church in the city of Karshi. (The church is one of several Baptist congregations that, as a matter of religious conviction, had not attempted to register.) The police detained and beat many of the participants. Authorities sentenced two of the group's organizers to 10 days' incarceration and demanded that they pay fines. The Government investigated the incident and some officials acknowledged that the Karshi police acted improperly; however, no disciplinary action was taken against the officers involved. On May 14, 2000, police detained 10 Baptists who were meeting for prayer in a private home in Tashkent. The pastor of the unregistered group was forced to pay a fine of \$26 (18,500 sum).

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

Beginning in August 1999, the Government made a concerted effort to improve respect for the religious freedom of Christians and members of other minority confessions. The President pardoned six Christians who had been imprisoned, some on fabricated narcotics charges, because of their religious activities. These were: Pastor

Ibrahim Yusupov of Tashkent, Sergei Brazgin of Uchkuduk, Na'il Asanov of Bukhara, Pastor Rashid Turibayev of the unregistered Karakalpak Full Gospel Christian Church in Nukus and Turibayev's associates, Farkhad Yangibayev, and Yasif Tarashev.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice summarily approved the registration applications of 20 minority religion congregations that were having trouble registering. Since August 1999, the Committee on Religious Affairs has assisted several additional congregations with problematic registration applications, and the Ministry of Justice has been relatively tolerant in approving applications. After the October 1999 incident in Karshi, the Committee on Religious Affairs took steps to ensure that police allow such Baptist congregations, which consider registration to be inconsistent with their religious beliefs, to meet undisturbed for worship.

In a February 2000 roundtable on religious freedom, officials called for clarifications that would bring religion law and practice into line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and on May 25, 2000, President Karimov suggested that the Parliament consider improvements to the religion law.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. There is no pattern of discrimination against Jews. Synagogues function openly; Hebrew education (long banned in the Soviet Union), Jewish cultural events, and the publication of a community newspaper take place undisturbed. However, many Jews are emigrating because of the perception of bleak economic prospects in Uzbekistan and their connection to families abroad.

Members of ethnic groups that traditionally are associated with Islam who convert to Christianity sometimes encounter particular societal and low-level governmental hostility.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy is engaged actively in monitoring religious freedom issues and problems and maintains contact with both government and religious leaders.

The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and other U.S. officials met with the Uzbek Ambassador to the United States in July, August, and November 1999 and June 2000 to encourage improvement in his country's respect for religious freedom.

The chief of staff of the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe of the U.S. Congress, along with several staff members, held a series of meetings in Tashkent with government officials in December 1999. Issues of religious freedom were a prominent part of the agenda in these discussions.

In February 2000, the assistant to the Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Newly Independent States gave a major address on religious freedom at the Tashkent University for World Economy and Diplomacy. Together with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, he also discussed the country's religion law, and issues of religious freedom with government officials, religious leaders, and human rights activists. The Deputy Assistant Secretary held additional separate meetings on these topics with both officials and activists.

The U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan delivered a speech calling for improved respect for religious freedom at the Ombudsman's February 29, 2000, Roundtable on Amending the Religion Law.

The Secretary of State met with President Karimov in Tashkent in April 2000, and raised U.S. concerns on these issues, in particular calling for amendments to the religion law. During her visit the Secretary also visited Muslim and Jewish places of worship.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor returned to Uzbekistan with the Secretary's party in April to follow up on his previous meetings, and held a separate series of discussions with government officials. He also met with the families of victims of government repression against independent Muslims, as well as with human rights activists.

The Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and staff visited Uzbekistan and met with foreign ministry and other officials in May, 2000, to press for progress in amending the religion law, improved treatment of imprisoned Mus-

lims, and permission for missionary activity. He also met with religious leaders of minority confessions, including the Russian Orthodox Church, with the families of victims of government repression against independent Muslims, and with human rights activists.

The U.S. Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission raised issues of religious freedom on at least 10 occasions in meetings with the Foreign Minister and other officials, as well as in the context of the U.S.-Uzbek human rights working group.

The Embassy's human rights officer regularly discussed religious freedom with the deputy director of the Committee on Religious Affairs in the Cabinet of Ministers. The Embassy's human rights officer maintains regular contact with religious leaders and human rights activists on these and other issues.



## NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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### ALGERIA

The Constitution declares Islam to be the state religion but prohibits discrimination based on religious belief, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

Islam is the only legal religion, and the law limits the practice of other faiths; however, the Government follows a de facto policy of tolerance by not inquiring into the religious practices of individuals. Terrorists continue to justify their killing of security force members and civilians by referring to interpretations of religious texts. The level of violence perpetrated by terrorists declined during the period covered by this report.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and religious homogeneity of society contribute to the free practice of religion. A very small number of citizens practice nonmainstream forms of Islam or other religions. These groups do not seek political rights as groups, and there is minimal societal discrimination against them.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy has worked with Islamic organizations to promote exchanges with U.S.-based organizations, with a view toward promoting democratic principles within these organizations.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution declares Islam to be the state religion but prohibits discrimination based on religious belief, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

Islam is the only legal religion, and the law limits the practice of other faiths; however, the Government follows a de facto policy of tolerance by not inquiring into the religious practices of individuals.

##### *Religious Demography*

The vast majority of citizens belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. There are no official data available on the number of non-Muslim residents. Many citizens who practice non-Muslim faiths have fled the country as a result of the civil war. Thus, the number of Christians and Jews in the country is significantly lower today than the estimated total before 1992. The small Christian community, which is predominantly Roman Catholic, has approximately 25,000 members, and the Jewish community numbers perhaps fewer than 100.

For security reasons, both Christians and Jews have concentrated in Algiers and the larger cities of Constantine and Oran. There is also a Christian community in the eastern region of Kabylie. The small Christian and Jewish populations practice their faiths without government interference.

##### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The law prohibits public assembly for purposes of practicing a faith other than Islam. However, there are Roman Catholic churches, including a cathedral in Algiers, which is the seat of the Archbishop, that conduct services without government interference. In 1994 the size of the Jewish community diminished significantly, and its synagogue has since been abandoned. There are only a few smaller churches and other places of worship; non-Muslims usually congregate in private homes for religious services.

Because Islam is the state religion, the country's education system is structured to benefit Muslims. Education is free to all citizens below the age of 16, and the

study of Islam is a strict requirement in the public schools, which are regulated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Private primary and secondary schools are not permitted to operate.

The Government appoints preachers to mosques and gives general guidance on sermons. The Government monitors activities in mosques for possible security-related offenses. The Ministry of Religious Affairs provides some financial support to mosques and has limited control over the training of imams.

Conversions from Islam to other religions are rare. Because of safety concerns and potential legal and social problems, Muslim converts practice their new faith clandestinely. The Shari'a-based Family Code prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims, although this regulation is not always enforced. The code does not restrict Muslim men from marrying non-Muslim women.

Non-Islamic proselytizing is illegal, and the Government restricts the importation of non-Islamic literature for widespread distribution. Personal copies of the major works of other religions, such as the Bible, may be brought into the country. Occasionally, such works are sold in local bookstores in Algiers. However, many vendors refuse to sell these works due to fear of reprisal by extremists, and, to a lesser extent, because of government policy. The Government also prohibits the dissemination of any literature that portrays violence as a legitimate precept of Islam.

Under both Shari'a (Islamic law) and Algerian law, children born to a Muslim father are Muslim, regardless of the mother's religion. Islam does not allow conversion to other faiths at any age.

Religious affiliation is not noted on identity documents issued by the Government.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, an indeterminate number of persons were serving prison sentences because of their alleged Islamist sympathies or membership in Islamist groups; however, there were no reports of cases in which it was clear that persons were arrested or detained based solely on their religious beliefs.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

The country's 8-year civil conflict has pitted self-proclaimed radical Muslims against moderate Muslims. Approximately 100,000 civilians, terrorists, and security forces have been killed during the past 8 years. Extremist self-proclaimed Islamists have issued public threats against all "infidels" in the country, both foreigners and citizens, and have killed both Muslims and non-Muslims, including missionaries. During the period covered by this report, extremists continued attacks against both the Government and moderate Muslim and secular civilians. The majority of the country's terrorist groups do not, as a rule, differentiate between religious and political killings. In the majority of cases during the period covered by this report, in which both security forces and civilians died at the hands of terrorists, the preferred methods of assault were knifings (particularly throat-slitting), and shootings. Terrorists, claiming religious justification for their actions, set up false roadblocks to kill civilians and security forces personnel. Terrorists also killed villagers and shepherds in their homes and fields, with firearms and knives.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The majority of cases of harassment and security threats against non-Muslims come from radical Islamists who are determined to rid the country of those who do not share their extremist interpretation of Islam (see Section I). However, a majority of the population subscribes to Islamic precepts of tolerance in religious beliefs. Through joint communiques, moderate Islamist religious and political leaders have criticized publicly acts of violence committed in the name of Islam.

In general, noncitizens who practice faiths other than Islam enjoy a high level of tolerance within society. However, citizens who renounce Islam generally are ostracized by their families and shunned by their neighbors, and expose themselves to the risk of attack by radical extremists. The Government generally does not become involved in these kinds of internal family disputes.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains frequent contact with the National Observatory for Human Rights (ONDH), a quasi-governmental institution that was established by the Government in response to international and domestic pressure to improve Algeria's human rights record. The Embassy assists wherever possible to augment the

ONDH's ability to address human rights abuses. The Embassy also maintains contact with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and discusses religious freedom issues.

Because Algiers was rated as a "critical threat" post during the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy's staff level was one-third the size that it would have been under normal circumstances. Officers were confined to the Embassy grounds and moved outside its walls, for business purposes only, with armed escorts. For practical and logistical purposes, the Embassy could not maintain regular contact with leaders in the Muslim community or with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Nevertheless, the Embassy tracked human rights issues, including religious freedom, as closely as possible under these restrictive working conditions.

The Embassy maintains close contact with religious leaders in the non-Muslim community, who cite the dangers posed by radical Islamists as their principal concern regarding the safe practice of their faith.

The Embassy has established contacts with several moderate Islamist organizations, including a social service nongovernmental organization and a scholarly institute.

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## BAHRAIN

The Constitution states that Islam is the official religion and also provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government does not tolerate political dissent, including from religious groups or leaders. The Government subjects both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims to governmental control and monitoring. Members of other religions who practice their faith privately do so without interference from the Government.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Proselytizing by non-Muslims is discouraged, anti-Islamic writings are prohibited, and conversions from Islam to other religions, while not illegal, are not tolerated well by society. Although there are notable exceptions, the Sunni Muslim minority enjoys a favored status.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution states that Islam is the official religion and also provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government does not tolerate political dissent, including from religious groups or leaders. The Government subjects both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims to governmental control and monitoring. Members of other religions who practice their faith privately do so without interference from the Government.

#### *Religious Demography*

The population is overwhelmingly Muslim. Citizens belong to the Shi'a and Sunni branches of Islam, with Shi'a constituting more than two-thirds of the indigenous population. However, Sunnis predominate because the ruling family is Sunni and is supported by the armed forces, the security service, and powerful Sunni and Shi'a merchant families. Foreigners constitute 35 to 40 percent of the total population. Roughly half of resident foreigners are non-Muslim. Christians and other non-Muslims, including Jews, Hindus, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Sikhs, are free to practice their religion, maintain their own places of worship, and display the symbols of their religion.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government funds, monitors, and closely controls all official religious institutions. These include Shi'a and Sunni mosques, Shi'a Ma'tams (ceremonial centers), Shi'a and Sunni Waqfs (charitable foundations), and the religious courts, which represent both the Ja'afari (Shi'a) and Maliki (Sunni) schools of Islamic jurisprudence. While the Government rarely interferes with what it considers legitimate religious observations, it actively suppresses any activity deemed overtly political in nature. In the past, the Government occasionally has closed mosques and Ma'tams for allowing political demonstrations to take place on or near their premises and has detained religious leaders for delivering political sermons or for allowing such sermons to be delivered in their mosques. The Government also may appropriate or withhold funding in order to reward or punish particular individuals or places of worship.

There were no reported closures of Ma'tams or mosques during the period covered by this report.

The High Council for Islamic Affairs is charged with the review and approval of all clerical appointments within both the Sunni and Shi'a communities, and maintains program oversight for all citizens studying religion abroad. Public religious events, most notably the large annual commemorative marches by Shi'a, are permitted but are watched closely by the police. There are no restrictions on the number of citizens permitted to make pilgrimages to Shi'a shrines and holy sites in Iran, Iraq, and Syria. However, stateless residents who do not possess Bahraini passports often have difficulties arranging travel to religious sites abroad. The Government monitors travel to Iran and scrutinizes carefully those who choose to pursue religious study there.

Proselytizing by non-Muslims is discouraged, anti-Islamic writings are prohibited, and conversions from Islam to other religions, while not illegal, are not tolerated well by society. However, Bibles and other Christian publications are displayed and sold openly in local bookstores that also sell Islamic and other religious literature. Some small groups worship in their homes. Notable dignitaries from virtually every religion and denomination visit the country and frequently meet with the Government and civic leaders. Religious tracts of all branches of Islam, cassettes of sermons delivered by Muslim preachers from other countries, and publications of other religions are readily available.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The political dynamic of Sunni predominance has led to incidents of unrest between the Shi'a community and the Government, including during the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, the Government held in detention hundreds of Shi'a for security-related crimes such as treason. In June 1999, the Government gradually began freeing incarcerated individuals as part of an Amiri decree calling for the release or pardon of more than 350 Shi'a political prisoners, detainees, and exiles. Since then, the Amir has pardoned at least another 350 prisoners in December 1999 and the year 2000. In early July 1999, the Amir pardoned prominent Shi'a cleric Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, who had been in prison since 1996. Since his release, the Government has monitored Al-Jamri's movements closely. It also has denied him the right to issue marital status certificates, a lucrative source of income for many clerics. Several other clerics associated with Al-Jamri remain in jail. On March 22, 2000, Shi'a cleric leader Abdul Wahab Hussain was rearrested only hours after a judge released him following more than 4 years in detention without charge. The authorities neither brought charges against Hussain nor provided an explanation for his rearrest. Hussain remained incarcerated in a Manama jail at the end of the period covered by this report. By the end of the period covered by this report, it is believed that less than 500 persons still remain in detention for political reasons. There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners during the period covered by this report whose imprisonment could be attributed to the practice of their religion.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although there are notable exceptions, the Sunni Muslim minority enjoys a favored status. Sunnis receive preference for employment in sensitive government positions and in the managerial ranks of the civil service. Shi'a citizens are not allowed to hold significant posts in the defense and internal security forces. However, since April 1999, Shi'a have been allowed to be employed in the enlisted ranks of the Bahrain Defense Force and with the Ministry of the Interior, two bodies in which Shi'a had been denied employment during the past 4 years. In the private sector, Shi'a tend to be employed in lower paid, less skilled jobs.

Educational, social, and municipal services in most Shi'a neighborhoods, particularly in rural villages, are inferior to those found in Sunni urban communities. In an effort to remedy social discrimination, the Government has built numerous subsidized housing complexes, which are open to all citizens on the basis of financial need. In order to ease both the housing shortage and strains on the national budget, in 1997 the Government revised its policy in order to permit lending institutions to finance mortgages on apartment units.



The Government has declared the Shi'a religious celebration of Ashura to be a national holiday, and allows Shi'a to stage public demonstrations during the holiday. In a gesture of conciliation toward the Shi'a community, the Amir donated rice and lamb to some 500 Shi'a community centers for the 2000 Ashura.

Converts from Islam to other religions are not well tolerated by society (see Section I).

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

An official written dialog takes place between U.S. Embassy officials and government contacts on matters of religion. One such example is the memorandum received by the Embassy each year from the Government in response to the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for Bahrain.

## EGYPT

The Constitution provides for freedom of belief and the practice of religious rites; however, the Government places restrictions on this right. Under the Constitution, Islam is the official state religion and primary source of legislation. Accordingly, religious practices that conflict with Islamic law (Shari'a) are prohibited. However, in Egypt the practice of Christianity or Judaism does not conflict with Shari'a and, for the most part, members of the non-Muslim minority worship without harassment and maintain links with coreligionists abroad.

There was a trend toward improvement in the Government's respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government undertook a series of initiatives to address the concerns of the Christian community, including the facilitation of church repairs, the appointment of Copts to senior positions in the ruling political party, and expanded treatment of Coptic themes in the media. There was a significant increase in press and public discussion of the subject of religious discrimination.

Many Egyptians agree that more needs to be done to eliminate religious discrimination, but argue that development of the economy, polity, and society is the most effective and enduring way to abolish prejudice. A trade dispute between a Christian clothing merchant and a Muslim customer that occurred on December 31, 1999, in the village of Al-Kush in Sohag governorate, escalated into violent exchanges between Muslims and Christians in the area, culminating in the death of 21 Christians and 1 Muslim on January 2, 2000.

The subject of religious freedom remains an important and active part of the bilateral dialog between the U.S. and Egyptian Governments. President Clinton, the U.S. Ambassador, other senior administration officials, and members of Congress have raised U.S. concerns about religious discrimination with President Hosni Mubarak and other senior officials.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of belief and the practice of religious rites; however, the Government places restrictions on this right. Under the Constitution, Islam is the official state religion and primary source of legislation. Accordingly, religious practices that conflict with Shari'a are prohibited. However, in Egypt the practice of Christianity or Judaism does not conflict with Shari'a and, for the most part, members of the non-Muslim minority worship without harassment and maintain links with coreligionists abroad.

All mosques must be licensed, and the Government is engaged in an effort to control them legally. The Government appoints and pays the salaries of the imams who lead prayers in mosques, proposes themes for them, and monitors their sermons. In September 1999, the Minister of Awqaf announced that the Government now controls 46,000 mosques and 12,000 "zawaya" (corner mosques, or mosques located within a multipurpose building). (There are approximately 70,000 mosques in the country.) In an effort to combat extremists, the Government has announced its intention to bring all unauthorized mosques under its control by 2002.

#### *Religious Demography*

Most Egyptians are Sunni Muslims. There is a small number of Shi'a Muslims. Approximately 10 percent of the population, or 6 million of 64 million, are Christians, the majority of whom belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church. Other traditionally Christian communities include the Armenian, Greek, and Syrian Orthodox

Churches, and the Coptic, Armenian, Chaldean, Greek, Maronite, Roman, and Syrian Catholic Churches. An Evangelical Protestant Church, first established in the middle of the 19th century, has grown to a community of 17 Protestant denominations. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church was granted legal status in the 1960's. The non-Muslim, non-Coptic communities range in size from several thousand to hundreds of thousands. Christians are geographically dispersed throughout the country, although the percentage of Christians tends to be higher in upper (southern) Egypt than the national average.

The Jewish community currently numbers fewer than 200 persons. There is also a very small number of Baha'is.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

An 1856 Ottoman decree still in force requires non-Muslims to obtain what is now a presidential decree to build a place of worship. In addition, Interior Ministry regulations issued in 1934 specify a set of 10 conditions that the Government must consider prior to issuance of a presidential decree permitting construction of a church. These conditions include the location of the proposed site, the religious composition of the surrounding community, and the proximity of other churches.

The Ottoman decree also requires the President to approve permits for the repair of church facilities. In response to strong criticism of the decree, President Mubarak took several steps to facilitate church repairs. In December 1999, President Mubarak issued a decree making the repair of all places of worship subject to a 1976 civil construction code. The decree is significant symbolically because it places churches and mosques on equal footing before the law. The practical impact of the decree has been to facilitate significantly church repairs. During the period covered by this report, the Government approved a total of 32 permits for church-related construction, including 4 permits for the construction of new churches; 6 permits for the construction of additional church facilities; and 26 permits for churches previously constructed without authorization. The Government reported that governors issued more than 200 permits for church-related repair in 1999.

However, the approval process for church construction is time-consuming and insufficiently responsive to the wishes of the Christian community. Although President Mubarak reportedly has approved all requests for permits presented to him, Christians maintain that the Interior Ministry delays—in some instances indefinitely—submission to the President of their requests. They also maintain that security forces have blocked them from utilizing permits that have been issued.

As a result of these restrictions, some communities use private buildings and apartments for religious services. In February 2000, security forces closed a church operating without a permit in the city of Al-Tour in the Sinai. The Christian community in the Sinai had submitted its first request for a permit to construct a church in Al-Tour in 1995. In April 2000, the Government issued a permit to build a new church in the neighborhood of Al-Qalag in the city of Shebin Al-Khayma in Qalubiyah governorate. Security forces had closed the community's historic church in 1989. In May 2000, the weekly Christian newspaper *Watany* published an editorial series documenting the Government's failure to issue church permits in 10 "new communities" (those areas outside the traditionally inhabited Nile Valley).

In January 1996, human rights activist Mamdouh Naklah filed suit challenging the constitutionality of the Ottoman decree. In December 1998, an administrative court referred Naklah's case to the State Commissioner's Office. This decision was considered a setback, as this body of legal experts is not required to issue an opinion expeditiously and its advisory opinions are not binding. The office had not issued an opinion in this case by mid-2000. Once an opinion is issued, the court is expected to try the case.

Neither the Constitution nor the Civil and Penal Codes prohibit proselytizing or conversion. However, during the past 2 decades, several dozen Christians who were accused of proselytizing or who had converted from Islam to Christianity have been harassed by police or arrested on charges of violating Article 98(F) of the Penal Code, which prohibits citizens from ridiculing or insulting heavenly religions or inciting sectarian strife. No such incidents occurred during the period covered by this report.

There are no restrictions on the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. However, in cases involving conversion from Islam to Christianity, authorities have charged several converts with violating laws prohibiting the falsification of documents. In such instances, converts, who fear government harassment if they officially register the change from Islam to Christianity, have altered their identification cards and other official documents themselves to reflect their new religious affiliation. No such charges were raised during the period covered by this report.

In 1997, human rights activist Mamdouh Naklah filed suit seeking removal of the religious affiliation category from government identification cards. Naklah challenged the constitutionality of a 1994 decree by the Minister of Interior governing the issuance of new identification cards. The court referred the case to the State Commissioner's Office. In May 2000, the State Commissioner's Office issued an opinion noting that the legal challenge had not been filed within 60 days of the decree's issuance, as required by law. However, the advisory opinions of the State Commissioner's Office are not binding. The court is now expected to try the case.

In 1960, President Gamal Abdel Nasser issued a decree (Law 263 for 1960) banning Baha'i institutions and community activities. All Baha'i community properties, including Baha'i centers, libraries, and cemeteries, were confiscated. This ban has not been rescinded.

According to a 1995 law, application of family law, including marriage, divorce, alimony, child custody, inheritance, and burial, is based on an individual's religion. In the practice of family law, the State recognizes only the three "heavenly religions": Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Muslim families are subject to the Personal Status Law, which draws on Shari'a. Christian families are subject to canon law, and Jewish families are subject to Jewish law. In cases of family law disputes involving a marriage between a Christian woman and a Muslim man, the courts apply the Personal Status Law. The children of such marriages must be raised as Muslims. The Coptic Orthodox Church excommunicates Christian women who marry Muslim men. Muslim women are prohibited by Shari'a from marrying Christian men.

The Constitution requires schools to offer religious instruction. Public and private schools provide religious instruction according to the faith of the student.

The Minister of Awqaf, Hamdy Zaqqouq, established in 1996 a committee to address a dispute with the Coptic Orthodox Church that originated in 1952. At that time, the Government seized approximately 1,500 acres of land from the Church and transferred title to the Ministry of Awqaf, which is responsible for administering religious trusts. Based on the committee's recommendations, more than 800 acres have been returned to the Church. The committee continues to review claims to the remaining disputed property.

The Ministry of Awqaf engages in interfaith discussions both domestically and abroad.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government occasionally prosecutes members of religious groups whose practices deviate from mainstream Islamic beliefs and whose activities are believed to jeopardize communal harmony. One focus of government scrutiny has been the eponymous religious group established in 1969 by Salim AlFaramawy, which advocates the belief that members should isolate themselves from the State and society, which he considered atheistic, and abjure the use of science and technology, including medicine. Faramawy also advocated the consumption of dogs and cats, a practice prohibited by Islam. After his death in 1991, his son-in-law, Mohamed Gouda, reportedly assumed leadership of the group. In March 2000, the State Security Prosecutor arrested 48 persons from several governorates alleged to be members of the Faramawy group. Gouda and the other 47 alleged members of the group remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report, pending completion of an investigation by the Public Prosecutor.

On November 11, 1999, the State Security Prosecutor arrested 50 persons in Cairo suspected of heresy against Islam. On November 15, 1999, 30 detainees were released and the remaining 20 were charged with degrading Islam, inciting strife, and meeting illegally. The lead defendant, a woman named Manal Wahid Mana'a, was accused of attempting to establish a new Islamic offshoot. She claims that the Prophet Mohamed speaks to her. A State Security Emergency Court in Boulaq began the trial of Mana'a and her followers on May 9, 2000. The next hearing was scheduled for July 11, 2000.

In July 1999, a state security court in Alexandria convicted 14 persons of heresy against Islam. The lead defendant, Mohamed Ibrahim Mahfouz, was sentenced to 5 years in prison for claiming that he speaks directly to God and is at times transformed into God or the Prophet Mohamed. Seven of his followers were sentenced to 3 years in prison. Six of his followers were sentenced to 1 year in prison. Five other defendants were acquitted.

In August 1999, the public prosecutor reopened and expanded an investigation of police torture of mostly Christian detainees that took place during the police investigation in August and September 1998 of the murder of Samir Aweda Hakim and Karam Tamer Arsal in the largely Coptic village of Al-Kush in Sohag governorate. This investigation of police conduct is ongoing and no conclusions had been reached

by mid-2000. It is unclear whether religion was a factor in the actions of the police officers. Some human rights groups outside Egypt believe that religion was a factor in the Al-Kush murder investigation, but most human rights and Christian activists in Egypt do not. Police abuse of detainees is a widespread practice that occurs regardless of a detainee's religious beliefs.

On June 5, 2000, a criminal court in Sohag city convicted Shayboub William Aarsal of the murder of Hakim and Aarsal. The court sentenced Shayboub to 15 years in prison at hard labor. An appeal is pending. The Christian community of Al-Kush believes that Shayboub, a Christian resident of Al-Kush, was accused and convicted of the crime because of his religion. The public prosecution in Sohag has taken no action on charges of witness tampering in Shayboub's trial that were raised in 1998 against Bishop Wisa and Arch-Priest Antonious.

An estimated several thousand persons are imprisoned because of alleged support for or membership in Islamist groups seeking to overthrow the Government. The Government states that these persons are in detention because of membership in or activities on behalf of violent extremist groups, without regard to religious affiliation. There were no reports linking their detention solely to their religious belief.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

There was a trend toward improvement in the Government's respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In December 1999, President Mubarak issued a decree making the repair of all places of worship subject to a 1976 civil construction code. The decree is significant symbolically because it places churches and mosques on equal footing before the law. The practical impact of the decree has been to facilitate significantly church repairs. In February 2000, President Mubarak announced the reorganization of the Government's National Democratic Party (NDP), including the appointment of five Copts to senior political party positions. The NDP holds the vast majority of seats in Parliament. The NDP and opposition political parties also have announced that they intend to nominate Copts to run for seats in Parliament in the fall 2000 elections.

The Ministry of Tourism arranged festivities in June 2000, which were attended by the Prime Minister and other senior dignitaries, celebrating the millennium anniversary of the arrival of the Holy Family, which, according to tradition, sojourned in Egypt. The Ministry of Housing and the American Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Athra Kadisha were expected to complete construction of a highway-bridge through the ancient Basatin Jewish Cemetery in Cairo in September 2000. The project is designed to be a modern highway—part of Cairo's Ring Road—that traverses a cemetery but meets the religious strictures against moving or vibrating buried bodies.

In January 1999, the Government formed a committee of academics to revise the history curriculum in the primary and secondary schools. A primary objective of the committee is to reintroduce into the curriculum the Coptic and Byzantine periods of Egyptian history. During the period covered by this report, new text was developed; however, it has not yet been incorporated into the curriculum.

Building on actions first taken in December 1999 and January 2000, government-owned television and radio significantly expanded the amount of programming time devoted to Christian issues, including the live broadcast of Christmas and Easter services and documentaries on the Holy Family's travels in Egypt and other Christian history. Pope John Paul II's February 2000 visit to Egypt, including his Mass, visits to holy sites, and meetings with religious leaders, received extensive press and television coverage. The Government introduced several television dramas that emphasize religious tolerance, and news programs pointedly sought official Christian views on topical matters. The media did not broadcast any discriminatory programs. Government newspapers provided more editorial space to Christian themes and authors than in past years. The First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak, has endorsed the development of reading materials that advocate tolerance. These materials are distributed by projects under her patronage that promote literacy and educational opportunities for girls.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

During the past 2 decades, the "Islamic Group in Egypt" (Islamic Group) and other terrorist groups that seek the overthrow of the Government have committed violent acts, including assaults against government targets, foreign tourists, and Christians. There were no reported terrorist incidents during the period covered by this report. Government, Islamic, and community leaders have criticized the attacks

against Christians. The Government remains fully engaged in efforts to arrest and convict these extremists. However, some Christians allege that the Government is lax in protecting Christian lives and property. In October 1999, a State Security Emergency Court in Assiyut city began the trial of four members of a terrorist group from the upper city of Dairout who were accused of the murder and attempted murder of policemen and Christians in the early 1990's. On June 20, 2000, each of the four defendants was sentenced to 5 years in prison.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Muslims and Copts share a common history and national identity. They also share the same ethnicity, race, culture, and language. Christians are geographically dispersed throughout the country, and Christians and Muslims live as neighbors. At times religious tensions flare up and individual acts of prejudice occur. Discrimination is practiced by members of both faiths. The majority of citizens agree that more needs to be done to eliminate discrimination, but argue that development of the economy, polity, and society is the most effective and enduring way to abolish social prejudice.

The Constitution provides for equal public rights and duties without discrimination due to religion or creed. For the most part, these constitutional protections are upheld by the Government. However, discrimination against Christians exists. There are no Christians serving as governors, university presidents, and deans. There are few Christians in the upper ranks of the security services and armed forces. Although there was improvement in a few areas, government discriminatory practices include: Suspected statistical underrepresentation of the size of the Christian population; bias against Christianity and Coptic history in the educational curriculums; limited coverage of Christian subjects in the media; failure to admit Christians into public university training programs for Arabic language teachers (because the curriculum involves study of the Koran); discrimination against Christians in the public sector; and discrimination against Christians in staff appointments to public universities.

Christians have been the objects of occasional violent assault by the Islamic Group and other terrorists. However, there were no reports of terrorist attacks against Christians during the period covered by this report. In incidents unrelated to terrorism, a Christian priest in the lower (northern) city of Mahalla and a Christian priest in the city of Dairout were attacked by individual extremists in August and September 1999, respectively. The assailant in the first case was convicted on April 15, 2000 of assault and sentenced to 3 years at hard labor. The assailant in the second case was determined to be mentally unstable and placed in a state mental institution on April 29, 2000. The Government provided the priests with medical care.

The public prosecutor charged Ahmad Fergally Ahmad Nasir and Ibrahim Fergally Ahmad Nasir with premeditated murder after the Nasir brothers shot and killed a monk on September 2, 1999, in Assiyut governorate following a land dispute. The monk was affiliated with a monastery that rents thousands of acres of agricultural land to local tenants, and the Nasir brothers were tenants on the land. The public prosecutor appealed the September 21, 1999 verdict of a criminal court that ruled that the Nasir brothers were guilty of an "attack leading to death" and sentenced them to 7 years in prison. The public prosecutor is seeking a conviction for premeditated murder. The case was pending before an appeals court at mid-2000.

A trade dispute between a Christian clothing merchant and a Muslim customer that occurred on December 31, 1999, in the village of Al-Kush in Sohag governorate, escalated into violent exchanges between Muslims and Christians in the area, resulting in the death of 21 Christians and 1 Muslim on January 2, 2000. The violence also resulted in the injury of 39 persons in AlKush and 5 persons in the neighboring municipality of Dar AlSalaam. Approximately 200 businesses and homes in the area were damaged. Following the incident, President Mubarak sent the Minister of Local Administration to Al-Kush as his emissary. The Minister of Housing and the Public Prosecutor also visited Al-Kush to investigate. The Government subsequently provided \$882 (3000 Egyptian pounds) to each of the families of those who were killed and \$147 (500 Egyptian pounds) to each person who was injured. The Government relocated and rebuilt 65 kiosks destroyed in the riots. The placement of the kiosks prior to the incident had been a subject of longstanding dispute between Christian and Muslim merchants. The Christian community estimates that Christian residents and merchants lost \$1,061,588 (3,609,400 Egyptian pounds) worth of merchandise and personal property during the looting. The Ministry of Social Affairs thus far has disbursed \$15,560 (52,900 Egyptian pounds) in compensation. The

Coptic Orthodox Church has provided \$192,779 (655,450 Egyptian pounds) in compensation. Several individuals and organizations also provided donations to the Christian community in Al-Kush.

On March 11, 2000 the Public Prosecutor announced the indictment of 135 persons for involvement in the sectarian violence, on charges ranging from unlawful assembly to murder. Charges initially raised against a local priest were dropped. On June 3, 2000 a criminal court in Sohag city conducted the first hearing in the trial of 39 persons indicted for committing acts of violence in the municipality of Dar Al-Salaam. The next hearing was scheduled for July 3, 2000. On June 4, 2000, the same criminal court in Sohag city conducted the first hearing in the trial of 96 persons accused of committing acts of violence in the village of Al-Kush. The next hearing was scheduled for August 7, 2000. Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda stated publicly that negligence on the part of the police and local leaders led to an increase in the number of victims and an escalation of the violence. Although rumors reportedly played a significant role in exacerbating the violence, no incitement charges were brought. The Government did not investigate police conduct; however, the director of state security for Sohag governorate, Said Abu Al-Ma'aly, was removed from his position in March.

On May 8, 2000, Islamist students from Al-Azhar University clashed with police after their protest of the Culture Ministry's re-issuance of a novel, which the students deemed insulting to Islam, turned violent. Dozens of students were injured and approximately 75 were detained for up to 15 days of questioning. None of the students were charged for their roles in the incident. Islamic fundamentalists had objected to the Culture Ministry's supposed pro-Western, anti-Islamic orientation.

There were reports of forced conversions of Coptic girls to Islam. Reports of such cases are disputed and often include inflammatory allegations and categorical denials of kidnaping and rape. Observers, including human rights groups, find it extremely difficult to determine whether compulsion was used, as these cases typically involve a Coptic girl who converts to Islam when she marries a Muslim boy. According to the Government, the girl in such cases must meet with her family, with her priest, and with the head of her church before she is allowed to convert. However, there are credible reports of the Government's failure to ensure that such meetings occur, of government harassment of Christian families that attempt to regain custody of their daughters prior to the marriage, and of the failure of the authorities to uphold the law (which states that a marriage of a girl under the age of 16 is prohibited, and between the ages of 16 and 21 is illegal without the approval and presence of her guardian) in some cases of marriage between an underage Christian girl and a Muslim male.

There is no legal requirement for a Christian girl or woman to convert to Islam in order to marry a Muslim. If a Christian woman marries a Muslim man, she is excommunicated by the Church. Ignorance of the law and social pressure, including the centrality of marriage to a woman's identity, often affect her decision. Family conflict and financial pressure also are cited as factors. In addition, conversion is a means of circumventing the legal prohibition on marriage between the ages of 16 and 21 without the approval and presence of the girl's guardian. Most Christian families would object to a daughter's wish to marry a Muslim. However, if a Christian girl converts to Islam, her family loses guardianship, which transfers to a Muslim custodian, who is likely to grant approval. The law is silent on the matter of the acceptable age of conversion.

Official relations between Christian and Muslim religious figures are amicable, and include reciprocal visits to religious celebrations. A committee on dialog was established in 1998 by the Vatican and Al-Azhar, the country's foremost Islamic institution and a preeminent seminary of Sunni Islamic study. Al-Azhar engages in other interfaith discussions, both in the country and abroad. The Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) supports a Center for Intercultural Dialog. In May 2000, Al-Azhar and the CEOSS cosponsored a conference on "Religious Thought and Justice." Held in the city of Port Said, the conference drew more than 100 participants, including the Minister of Awqaf and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. Other informal interfaith discussions take place, as well. Private Christian schools admit Muslim students, and religious charities serve both communities.

Rejecting foreign and some local negative characterizations of government treatment of Christians, local Christian and Muslim leaders formed a Council of "Wise Men" in 1998 to define the problems of the Christian community and to propose solutions to the Government and society. The council identified the following five priorities: Abolishing the Ottoman decree and related regulations governing the construction and repair of churches; increasing the number of Christians nominated for elected positions by the governing National Democratic Party; increasing the number of Christians appointed to senior government positions; correcting the imbalance

in media treatment of Christian subjects and prohibiting the inclusion of discriminatory materials; and correcting the deficiencies in the educational curriculums, including insufficient treatment of the Coptic era of history. The Government is addressing many of these concerns. In February 2000, following the new year's sectarian violence in Sohag, these leaders issued a second petition renewing their call on the Government and society to abolish religious discrimination. In general there was a significant increase in press and public discussion of religious discrimination during the period covered by this report.

Anti-Semitism in the press is found in both the government press and in the non-official press of the opposition parties. The Government has advised journalists and cartoonists to avoid anti-Semitism. There have been no anti-Semitic incidents in recent years directed at the tiny Jewish community.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The subject of religious freedom is an important part of the bilateral dialog. The subject has been raised at all levels of government, including by the President, Secretary of State, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, the U.S. Ambassador, and other embassy officials. The Embassy maintains formal contacts with the Office of Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, the Ambassador has discussed religious freedom with senior government officials and religious leaders. The Embassy also regularly discusses religious freedom issues in contacts with other government officials, including governors and Members of Parliament. In May 2000, representatives from the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor visited and met with official interlocutors and community activists. Visiting congressional delegations have raised religious freedom issues during visits with government officials.

The U.S. Embassy maintains an active dialog with the leaders of the Christian and Muslim religious communities, human rights groups, and other activists. The Embassy investigates every complaint of religious discrimination brought to its attention. The Embassy also discusses religious freedom with a range of contacts, including academics, businessmen, and citizens outside of the capital area, as well as those from a lower-income background.

The U.S. Mission, including the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), works in concert to expand human rights and to ameliorate the conditions that breed religious strife by promoting economic, social, and political development. U.S. programs and activities support initiatives in several areas directly related to religious freedom. During the period covered by this report, the Mission provided training to Egyptian police in human rights practices and community policing techniques. The Mission is working to strengthen civil society, including training for nongovernmental groups that promote religious tolerance. In March 2000, the Nongovernmental Organization Service Center was funded by USAID to provide training and technical assistance to Egyptian NGO's began operating. The Embassy has nominated participants interested in advocacy for the international visitors program, and invited American specialists in this subject as part of the State Department's Speakers Program. Another mission initiative is to strengthen the rule of law. USAID supports a major effort to improve the administration of justice, and State Department exchange activities promote legal reform and access to justice. The Mission also promotes civic education. The public affairs section of the Embassy is supporting the development of materials that encourage tolerance, diversity, and understanding of others, in both Arabic-language and English-language curriculums. USAID, in collaboration with the Children's Television Workshop, developed an Egyptian version of the television program *Sesame Street*, which is designed to reach isolated households and has as one of its goals the promotion of tolerance. The show was scheduled to begin in the summer of 2000; it had not been aired by the end of the period covered by this report. USAID also supports private voluntary organizations that are implementing innovative curriculums in private schools. The public affairs section of the Embassy is leading an effort to increase the professionalism of the press, with an emphasis on balanced and responsible coverage. Finally, USAID is working with the Supreme Council of Antiquities to promote the conservation of cultural antiquities, including Islamic, Christian, and Jewish historical sites.

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## IRAN

The Government restricts freedom of religion. The Constitution declares that the “official religion of Iran is Islam and the doctrine followed is that of Ja’fari (Twelver) Shi’ism.” Members of Iran’s religious minorities—including Baha’is, Jews, Christians, and Sufi Muslims—reported imprisonment, harassment, and intimidation based on their religious beliefs. At least 11 Baha’is were among those still imprisoned for reasons related to their faith, while 10 Jews remained in prison after being convicted for cooperating with a hostile government, belonging to an illegal organization, and recruiting members in an illegal organization.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Society is accustomed to the presence of Iran’s pre-Islamic, non-Muslim communities. However, government actions create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities, especially Baha’is, Jews, and evangelical Christians. The Revolutionary Court’s conduct in the trial of 13 Jews contributed to worsening societal attitudes toward the Jewish community.

The U.S. Government makes clear its objections to the Government’s treatment of religious minorities in public statements, support for relevant U.N. and non-governmental organization (NGO) efforts, and in diplomatic contacts with other countries.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Iran a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Government restricts freedom of religion. The Constitution declares that the “official religion of Iran is Islam and the doctrine followed is that of Ja’fari (Twelver) Shi’ism.” It also states that “other Islamic denominations are to be accorded full respect,” and designates Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as the only “recognized religious minorities,” which, “within the limits of the law,” are permitted to perform their religious rites and ceremonies and “to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.” Although the Constitution states that “the investigation of individuals’ beliefs is forbidden” and that “no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief,” the adherents of religions not specifically protected under the Constitution do not enjoy freedom of activity. This situation most directly affects members of the Baha’i Faith.

The central feature of the country’s Islamic republican system is rule by a “religious jurisconsult.” Its senior leadership, including the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, the President, the head of the judiciary, and the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), is composed principally of Shi’a clergymen.

Religious activity is monitored closely by the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance and by the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). Adherents of recognized religious minorities are not required to register individually with the Government, although their community, religious, and cultural events and organizations, as well as schools, are monitored closely. Baha’is are not recognized by the Government as a legitimate religious group but are considered an outlawed political organization. Registration of Baha’i adherents is a police function. Evangelical Christian groups have been pressured by government authorities to compile and hand over membership lists for their congregations. Evangelicals have resisted this demand.

#### *Religious Demography*

The population is approximately 99 percent Muslim, of which 89 percent are Shi’a and 10 percent are Sunni (mostly Turkomen, Arabs, Baluchs, and Kurds living in the southwest, southeast, and northwest). Sufi Brotherhoods are popular, but there are no reliable figures available to judge their true size.

Baha’is, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews constitute less than 1 percent of the population. The largest non-Muslim minority is the Baha’i Faith, estimated at about 300,000 to 350,000 adherents throughout the country. Estimates on the size of the Jewish community vary from 25,000 to 30,000. These figures represent a substantial reduction from the estimated 75,000 to 80,000 Jews who resided in the country prior to the 1979 Revolution. The Christian community is estimated at approximately 117,000 persons, according to government figures. Of these the majority consists of ethnic Armenians and AssyroChaldeans. There are also Protestant denominations, including evangelical churches.



The Government figures reported by the United Nations in 1996 place the size of the Zoroastrian community at approximately 35,000 adherents. Zoroastrian groups cite a larger figure of approximately 60,000, according to the same United Nations report. Zoroastrians are mainly ethnic Persians concentrated in the cities of Tehran, Kerman, and Yazd. Zoroastrianism was the official religion of the pre-Islamic Sassanid Empire and thus has played a central role in Iranian history.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The U.N. Special Representative for Human Rights in Iran noted in his September 1998 report frequent assertions that religious minorities are, by law and practice, barred from being elected to a representative body (except to the seats in the Majles reserved for minorities, as provided for in the Constitution) and from holding senior government or military positions. Members of religious minorities are allowed to vote, but they may not run for president. All religious minorities suffer varying degrees of officially sanctioned discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and housing.

Members of religious minorities generally are barred from becoming school principals. Applicants for public-sector employment are screened for their adherence to Islam. The law stipulates penalties for government workers who do not observe "Islam's principles and rules." Religious minorities may not serve in the army, the judiciary, or the security services. The Constitution states that "the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be an Islamic army, i.e., committed to an Islamic ideology and the people, and must recruit into its service individuals who have faith in the objectives of the Islamic Revolution and are devoted to the cause of achieving its goals." Baha'is are prohibited from government employment.

University applicants are required to pass an examination in Islamic theology, which limits the access of most religious minorities to higher education (despite the fact that public-school students receive instruction in Islam).

The Government allows recognized religious minorities to conduct the religious education of their adherents. This includes separate and privately funded Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian schools, but not Baha'i schools. The Ministry of Education, which imposes certain curriculum requirements, supervises these schools. With few exceptions, the directors of these private schools must be Muslim. Attendance at these schools is not mandatory for recognized religious minorities. All textbooks used in course work must be approved for use by the Ministry of Education, including religious texts. Religious texts in non-Persian languages require approval by the authorities for use. This requirement imposes sometimes significant translation expenses on minority communities.

Recognized religious minorities may provide religious instruction in non-Persian languages but often come under pressure from the authorities when conducting such instruction in Persian. In particular, evangelical Christian and Jewish communities suffer harassment and arrest by authorities for the printing of materials or delivery of sermons in Persian.

Recognized religious minorities are allowed by the Government to establish community centers and certain cultural, social, sports, or charitable associations that they finance themselves. This does not apply to the Baha'i community, which since 1983 has been denied the right to assemble officially or to maintain administrative institutions. Because the Baha'i Faith has no clergy, the denial of the right to form such institutions and elect officers has threatened its existence.

Religious minorities suffer discrimination in the legal system, receiving lower awards in injury and death lawsuits, and incurring heavier punishments, than Muslims. Muslim men are free to marry non-Muslim women but marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men are not recognized.

The Government is highly suspicious of any proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims and can be harsh in its response, in particular against Baha'is and evangelical Christians. The Government regards the Baha'i community, whose faith originally derives from a strand of Islam, as a "misguided" or "wayward" sect. The Government fuels anti-Baha'i and anti-Jewish sentiment in the country for political purposes.

The Government does not ensure the right of citizens to change or renounce their religious faith. Apostasy, specifically conversion from Islam, can be punishable by death.

The Baha'i Faith originated in Iran during the 1840's as a reformist movement within Shi'a Islam. Initially it attracted a wide following among Shi'a clergy. The political and religious authorities of that time joined to suppress the movement, and since then the hostility of the Shi'a clergy to the Baha'i Faith has remained intense. Baha'is are considered apostates because of their claim to a valid religious revelation subsequent to that of Muhammad. The Baha'i Faith is defined by the Govern-

ment as a political "sect" historically linked to the Shah's regime and, hence, as counterrevolutionary and characterized by its espionage activities for the benefit of foreign entities, particularly Israel. Historically at risk in the country, Baha'is often have suffered increased levels of harassment and abuse during times of political unrest.

Baha'is may not teach or practice their faith or maintain links with coreligionists abroad. The fact that the Baha'i world headquarters (established by the founder of the Baha'i Faith in the 19th century in what was then Ottoman-controlled Palestine) is situated in what is now the state of Israel, exposes Baha'is to government charges of "espionage on behalf of Zionism," in particular when caught communicating with or sending monetary contributions to the Baha'i Faith headquarters.

Broad restrictions on Baha'is appear to be geared to destroying them as a community. Baha'is repeatedly have been offered relief from oppression if they were prepared to recant their faith.

Baha'i cemeteries, holy places, historical sites, administrative centers and other assets were seized shortly after the 1979 revolution. None of the properties have been returned, and many have been destroyed. Baha'is are not allowed to bury and honor their dead in keeping with their religious tradition. They are permitted access only to areas of wasteland, designated by the Government for their use, and are not allowed to mark the graves. Many historic Baha'i gravesites have been desecrated or destroyed. In October 1998, three Baha'is were arrested in Damavand, a city north of Tehran, on the grounds that they had buried their dead without government authorization.

Baha'i group meetings and religious education, which often take place in private homes and offices, are curtailed severely. Public and private universities continue to deny admittance to Baha'i students, a particularly demoralizing blow to a community that traditionally has placed a high value on education. Denial of access to higher education appears aimed at the eventual impoverishment of the Baha'i community.

Baha'is regularly are denied compensation for injury or criminal victimization. Government authorities claim that only Muslim plaintiffs are eligible for compensation in these circumstances.

A 1993 law prohibits government workers from membership in groups that deny the "divine religions," terminology that the Government uses to label members of the Baha'i Faith. The law also stipulates penalties for government workers who do not observe "Islamic principles and rules."

In 1993 the U.N. Special Representative reported the existence of a government policy directive on the Baha'is. According to the directive, the Supreme Revolutionary Council instructed government agencies to block the progress and development of the Baha'i community, expel Baha'i students from universities, cut the Baha'is' links with groups outside the country, restrict the employment of Baha'is, and deny Baha'is "positions of influence," including those in education. The Government claims that the directive is a forgery. However, it appears to be an accurate reflection of current government practice.

While the Government eased some restrictions thereby enabling Baha'is to obtain food-ration booklets and send their children to public schools, the prohibition against the admission of Baha'is to universities remains. Thousands of Baha'is dismissed from government jobs in the early 1980's receive no unemployment benefits and have been required to repay the Government for salaries or pensions received from the first day of employment. Those unable to do so face prison sentences.

In his 1996 report to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Religious Intolerance recommended "that the ban on the Baha'i organization should be lifted to enable it to organize itself freely through its administrative institutions, which are vital in the absence of a clergy, so that it can engage fully in its religious activities." In response to the Special Rapporteur's concerns with regard to the lack of official recognition of the Baha'i Faith, government officials stated that the Baha'is "are not a religious minority, but a political organization which was associated with the Shah's regime, is against the Iranian Revolution and engages in espionage activities." According to the Special Rapporteur, government officials stated nonetheless that, as individuals, all Baha'is were entitled to their beliefs and were protected under other articles of the Constitution as citizens.

During the period covered by this report, the Government of Iran took some positive steps in recognizing the rights of Baha'is, as well as other religious minorities.

In November 1999, President Khatami publicly stated that no one in Iran should be persecuted because of his or her religious beliefs. He added that he would defend the civil rights of all citizens, regardless of their beliefs or religion. Subsequently, the Expediency Council approved the "Right of Citizenship" bill, affirming the social

and political rights of all citizens and their equality before the law. In February 2000, following approval of the bill, the head of the judiciary issued a circular letter to all registry offices throughout the country, which permits any couple to be registered as husband and wife without being required to state their religious affiliation. This measure effectively permits the registration of Baha'i marriages in Iran. Previously, Baha'i marriages were not recognized by the Government, leaving Baha'i women open to charges of prostitution. Consequently, children of Baha'i marriages were not recognized as legitimate and, therefore, were denied inheritance rights. The impact of the new registration policy on the status of Baha'i families remains unclear.

Although Sunni Muslims are accorded full respect under the terms of the Constitution, some groups claim discrimination on the part of the Government. In particular, Sunnis cite the lack of a Sunni mosque in Tehran and claim that authorities refuse to authorize construction of a Sunni place of worship in the capital.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The property rights of Baha'is generally are disregarded. Since 1979, large numbers of private and business properties belonging to Baha'is have been confiscated. During the period covered by this report, three Baha'i homes in Yazd and one in Arbakan were confiscated because their owners were members of the Baha'i community. In September and October 1998, government officers plundered more than 500 Baha'i homes throughout the country and seized personal household effects, such as furniture and appliances. Seizure of personal property, in addition to the denial of access to education and employment, is eroding the economic base of the Baha'i community.

Ruhollah Rowhani, a Baha'i, was executed in July 1998 after having served 9 months in solitary confinement on a charge of apostasy stemming from allegedly having converted a Muslim woman to the Baha'i Faith. The woman concerned asserted that her mother was a Baha'i and that she herself had been raised a Baha'i. Rowhani was not accorded a public trial or sentencing for his alleged crime, and no sentence was announced prior to his execution.

The Government of Iran continued to imprison and detain persons based on their religious beliefs. Manuchehr Khulusi was arrested in June 1999 while visiting fellow Baha'is in the town of Birjand, and was imprisoned until his release in May 2000. During his imprisonment, Khulusi was interrogated, beaten, held in solitary confinement, and denied access to his lawyer. The charges brought against him are still unknown, but they were believed to be related to his faith. The Islamic Revolutionary Court in Mashhad held a 2-day trial in September 1999 and then sentenced him to death in February 2000. Despite Khulusi's release, it is unclear if the conviction and death sentence against him still stand.

Two Baha'is, Sirus Zabihi-Moghaddam and Hadayat KashefiNajafabadi, are currently in prison for apostasy. Their death sentences were reaffirmed in February 2000. They were tried for apostasy alongside Rowhani. Four Baha'is are currently on death row—two for "Zionist Baha'i activities" and two for apostasy.

During the period covered by this report, authorities in Khurasan intensified their efforts to intimidate and undermine Baha'i education. Two teachers in Mashhad were arrested and sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment. Their students were given suspended sentences, to be carried out if the young persons again participated in religious education classes. Three more Baha'is were arrested in Bujnurd in northern Khurasan for participating in religious education gatherings. After 6 days in prison, they were released with suspended sentences of 5 years. The use of suspended sentences appears to be a new tactic for the Government to discourage Baha'is from taking part in monthly religious gatherings.

In September 1998, authorities launched a nationwide operation to disrupt the activities of the Baha'i Institute of Higher Learning, also known as the "Open University," which was established by the Baha'i community shortly after the revolution to offer higher educational opportunities to Baha'i students who had been denied access to the country's high schools and universities. The Institute employed Baha'i faculty and professors, many of whom had been dismissed from teaching positions by the Government as a result of their faith, and conducted classes in homes or offices owned or rented by Baha'is. During the operation, which took place in at least 14 different cities, 36 faculty members were arrested and a variety of personal property, including books, papers, and furniture, either were destroyed or confiscated. Government interrogators sought to force the detained faculty members to sign statements acknowledging that the Open University was now defunct and pledging not to associate with it in the future. Baha'is outside the country report that none of the 36 detainees would sign the document. All but 4 of the 36 persons detained

during the September 1998 raid on the Baha'i Institute were released by November 1998.

In March 1999, Dr. Sina Hakiman, Farzad Khajeh Sharifabadi, Habibullah Ferdosian Najafabadi, and Ziaullah Mirzapanah, the four remaining detainees from the September 1998 raid, were convicted under Article 498 of the Penal Code and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 3 to 10 years. In the court verdict, the four were accused of having established a "secret organization" engaged in "attracting youth, teaching against Islam, and teaching against the regime of the Islamic Republic." According to Baha'i groups outside Iran, the four taught general science and Persian literature courses. In July 1999, Mirzapanah, who had been sentenced to 3 years in prison, became ill and was hospitalized. Prison authorities allowed him to return home upon his recovery on the understanding that they could find him whenever necessary. The other three were released in December 1999.

The Government appears to adhere to a practice of keeping a small number of Baha'is in arbitrary detention, some at risk of execution, at any given time. There were 11 Baha'is reported to be under arrest for the practice of their faith as of June 1999, 4 under sentence of death.

The authorities have become particularly vigilant in recent years in curbing what is perceived as increasing proselytizing activities by evangelical Christians whose services are conducted in Persian. Government officials have reacted to this perceived activity by closing evangelical churches and arresting converts. Members of evangelical congregations have been required to carry membership cards, photocopies of which must be provided to the authorities. Worshipers are subject to identity checks by authorities posted outside congregation centers. Meetings for evangelical services have been restricted by the authorities to Sundays, and church officials have been ordered to inform the Ministry of Information and Islamic Guidance before admitting new members to their congregations.

As conversion of a Muslim to a non-Muslim religion may be considered apostasy under traditional Shari'a practices enforced in the country, non-Muslims may not proselytize Muslims without putting their own lives at risk. Evangelical church leaders are subject to pressure from authorities to sign pledges that they would not evangelize Muslims or allow Muslims to attend church services.

One U.S.-based organization reported 8 deaths of evangelical Christians at the hands of authorities in the past 11 years and between 15 and 23 disappearances in the year between November 1997 and November 1998.

Oppression of evangelical Christians continued during the period covered by this report. Christian groups recently reported instances of government harassment of churchgoers in Tehran, in particular against worshipers at the Assembly of God congregation in the capital. Instances of harassment cited included conspicuous monitoring outside Christian premises by Revolutionary Guards to discourage Muslims or converts from entering church premises and demands for presentation of identity papers of worshipers inside. Iranian Christians International (ICI) detailed the cases of Alireza and Mahboobeh Mahmoudian, converts to Christianity and lay leaders of the Saint Simon the Zealot Osgofi Church in Shiraz, who were forced to leave the country permanently in June 1998 after continued harassment by authorities. ICI reported that Alireza Mahmoudian had lost his job because of his conversion and had been beaten repeatedly by Basijis (paramilitary forces) and Ansar-e Hizbollah (gangs of thugs often aligned with specific members of the leadership) on orders of government officials from the Ministry of Islamic Guidance. His wife, Mahboobeh, also had been the subject of intimidation, principally through frequent and aggressive interrogation by government officials.

While Jews are a recognized religious minority, allegations of official discrimination are frequent. The Government's anti-Israel policies, coupled with a perception among radicalized Muslim elements that Jewish citizens support Zionism and the State of Israel, create a threatening atmosphere for the small Jewish community. Jewish leaders reportedly are reluctant to draw attention to official mistreatment of their community due to fear of government reprisal.

Some Jewish groups outside Iran cite an increase in anti-Semitic propaganda in the official and semiofficial media as adding to the pressure felt by the Jewish community. One example cited is the periodic publication of the anti-Semitic and fictitious Protocols of the Elders of Zion, both by the Government and by periodicals associated with hardline elements of the regime. In 1986 the Iranian Embassy in London was reported to have published and distributed the Protocols in English. The Protocols also were published in serial form in the country in 1994 and again in January 1999. On the latter occasion they were published in *Sobh*, a conservative monthly publication reportedly aligned with the security services.

There appears to be little restriction or interference with their religious practice or education; however, Jews were eased out of the Government after 1979. Jews are

permitted to obtain passports and to travel outside the country but, with the exception of certain business travelers, are required by the authorities to obtain clearance (and pay additional fees) before each trip abroad. The Government appears concerned about the emigration of Jews and permission generally is not granted for all members of a Jewish family to travel outside the country at the same time.

In March 1999, 13 Jews were arrested in the cities of Shiraz and Isfahan and purportedly accused of espionage. Neither the defendants nor their legal counsel were informed of the formal charges facing the group until the trial began in April 2000. Among the group were several prominent rabbis, teachers of Hebrew, and their students, including a 16-year-old boy. Governments and human rights groups around the world criticized the arrests and the lack of due process accorded to the defendants. They also called for the safe treatment of the detainees, who were allowed only limited contact with defense counsel, sporadic family visits, and deliveries of kosher food. On July 1, 2000, the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz convicted 10 of the accused on charges of cooperating with a hostile government, membership in an illegal organization, and recruiting members in an illegal organization, and sentenced them to between 4 and 13 years in prison. Three of the original 13 were acquitted.

Jewish groups outside Iran noted that the March 1999 arrest of the 13 Jewish individuals coincided with an increase in anti-Semitic propaganda in newspapers and journals associated with hardline elements of the Government. Since the trial began in April 2000, Jewish businesses in Tehran and Shiraz have been targets of vandalism and boycotts, and Jews reportedly suffered personal harassment and intimidation.

Human Rights Watch reported the death in May 1998 of Jewish businessman Ruhollah Kakhodah-Zadeh, who was hanged in prison without a public charge or legal proceeding. Reports indicate that Kakhodah-Zadeh may have been killed for assisting Jews to emigrate. As an accountant, Kakhoda-Zadeh provided powerofattorney services for Jews departing the country.

The Government restricts the movement of several senior religious leaders, some of whom have been under house arrest for years, and often charges members of religious minorities with crimes such as drug offenses, "confronting the regime," and apostasy.

Human Rights Watch reported in 1998 the killing of Sunni prayer leader Molavi Imam Bakhsh Narouie in the province of Sistan vaBaluchistan in the southeast. This led to protests from the local community, which believed that government authorities were involved in the murder.

Majdhub Alishahi, an adherent of the Sufi tradition, reportedly was executed on charges of adultery and homosexuality after a coerced confession in 1996. Sufi organizations outside the country remain concerned about repression by the authorities of Sufi religious practices.

There were no reports of government harassment of the Zoroastrian community during the period covered by this report.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. However, according to the tenets of Islam, a child born to a Muslim father is automatically considered a Muslim.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The continuous activity of Iran's pre-Islamic, non-Muslim communities, such as Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, has accustomed the population to the presence of non-Muslims in society. However, government actions create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities.

The Jewish community has been reduced to more than one-half its pre-revolutionary size. Some of this emigration is connected with the larger, general waves of departures following the establishment of the Islamic Republic, but some also stems from perceived anti-Semitism on the part of the Government and within society.

The Government's anti-Israel policies and the trial of the 13 Jews, coupled with the perception among some of the country's radicalized elements that Iranian Jews support Zionism and the State of Israel, create a threatening atmosphere for the Jewish community (see Section I). Many Jews have sought to limit their contact with or support for the State of Israel out of fear of reprisal.

Sunni Muslims encounter religious discrimination at the local level, and reports of discrimination against practitioners of the Sufi tradition surfaced during the period covered by this report.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iran and thus cannot raise directly with the Government the restrictions the Government places on religious freedom and other abuses that it commits against adherents of minority religions. The U.S. Government makes its position clear in public statements, support for relevant United Nations and NGO efforts, and in diplomatic contacts with other countries.

The President has made a number of statements regarding the treatment of religious minorities in Iran, including a June 1998 statement criticizing the execution of Ruhollah Rowhani, a member of the Baha'i Faith, and statements in June 1999 and July 2000 calling on the Government to exonerate the imprisoned members of Iran's Jewish community. The Secretary of State also called on Iran to release and drop charges against the 13 Jews, 10 of whom were convicted and remained in prison at the end of the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government has cosponsored each year since 1982 a resolution regarding the human rights situation in Iran offered by the European Union at the annual meeting of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. The United States has supported a similar resolution offered each year during the United Nations General Assembly. The U.S. Government has supported strongly the work of the U.N. Special Representative on Human Rights for Iran and called on the Iranian Government to grant him admission and allow him to conduct his research (he has been denied entry visas since 1996).

The U.S. State Department spokesman on numerous occasions has addressed the situation of the Baha'i and Jewish communities, notably following the Secretary's March 17, 2000 speech on Iran, the execution of Ruhollah Rowhani in June 1998, the Government's actions against the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education in September 1998, and repeatedly after the arrest of 13 members of the Iranian Jewish community in March 1999. The U.S. Government has encouraged other governments to make similar statements and has pressed those governments to raise the issue of religious freedom in discussions with the Iranian Government.

In September 1999 the Secretary of State designated Iran a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

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## IRAQ

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely limits this right in practice, represses the Shi'a religious leadership, and seeks to exploit religious differences for political purposes. Islam is the official state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Although Shi'a Arabs are the largest religious group, Sunni Arabs traditionally have dominated economic and political life. Sunni Arabs are at a distinct advantage in all areas of secular life. The Government also severely restricts or bans outright many Shi'a religious practices. The Government has for decades conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, arbitrary arrest, and protracted detention against the religious leaders and followers of the majority Shi'a Muslim population and has sought to undermine the identity of minority Christian (Assyrian and Chaldean) and Yazidi groups. The regime has systematically killed senior Shi'a clerics, desecrated Shi'a mosques and holy sites, interfered with Shi'a religious education, and prevented Shi'a adherents from performing their religious rites.

The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iraq and thus is unable to raise directly with the Government the problems of severe restrictions on religious freedom and other human rights abuses. However, the U.S. Government makes its position clear in public statements and in diplomatic contacts with other states.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Iraq a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely restricts this right in practice. Islam is the official state religion. The Constitution does not provide for the recognition of Assyrians, Chaldeans, or Yazidis.

The Government's registration requirements for religious organizations are unknown. New political parties must be based in Baghdad and are prohibited from having any ethnic or religious character. The Government does not recognize political organizations that have been formed by Shi'a Muslims or Assyrian Christians. These groups continued to attract support despite their illegal status. There are religious qualifications for government office; candidates for the National Assembly, for example, "must believe in God."

There are no Shari'a (Islamic law) courts as such. Civil courts are empowered to administer Islamic law in cases involving personal status, such as divorce and inheritance.

*Religious Demography*

While a precise statistical breakdown is impossible because of likely inaccuracies in the latest census (taken in 1997), according to conservative estimates, 97 percent of the population of 22 million persons are Muslim. The (predominantly Arab) Shi'a Muslims constitute a 60 to 65 percent majority, while Sunni Muslims make up 32 to 37 percent (approximately 18 to 20 percent are Sunni Kurds, 12 to 15 percent are Sunni Arabs, and the rest are Sunni Turkomans). The remaining approximately 3 percent consist of Christians (Assyrians, Chaldeans, Roman Catholics, and Armenians), Yazidis, and a small number of Jews.

The Shi'a, though predominantly located in the south, also are present in large numbers in Baghdad and have communities in most parts of the country. Sunnis form the majority in the center of the country and in the north.

Shi'a and Sunni Arabs are not ethnically distinct. Shi'a Arabs have supported an independent Iraq alongside their Sunni brethren since the 1920 Revolt; many Shi'a joined the Ba'ath Party and formed the backbone of the Iraqi Army in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War.

Assyrians and Chaldeans are considered by many to be distinct ethnic groups as well as the descendants of some of the earliest Christian communities. These communities speak a distinct language (Syriac). Although these groups do not define themselves as Arabs, the Government defines Assyrians and Chaldeans as such, evidently to encourage them to identify with the Sunni-Arab dominated regime. Christians are concentrated in the north and in Baghdad.

The Yazidis are a syncretistic religious group (or a set of several groups). Many Yazidis consider themselves to be ethnically Kurdish, though some would define themselves as both religiously and ethnically distinct from Muslim Kurds. However, the Government, without any historical basis, has defined the Yazidis as Arabs. Yazidis are located in the north of the country.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Although Shi'a Arabs are the largest religious group, Sunni Arabs traditionally have dominated economic and political life. Sunni Arabs are at a distinct advantage in all areas of secular life, be it civil, political, military, or economic.

The following government restrictions on religious rights remained in effect throughout the period covered by this report: restrictions and outright bans on communal Friday prayer by Shi'a; restrictions on Shi'a mosque libraries loaning books; a ban on the broadcast of Shi'a programs on government-controlled radio or television; a ban on the publication of Shi'a books, including prayer books and guides; a ban on funeral processions other than those organized by the Government; a ban on other Shi'a funeral observances such as gatherings for Koran reading; and the prohibition of certain processions and public meetings commemorating Shi'a holy days.

Shi'a groups report capturing documents from the security services during the 1991 uprising that listed thousands of forbidden Shi'a religious writings. Since 1991 security forces have been encamped in the shrine to Imam Ali in Najaf, one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites, and at the Shi'a theological schools of Najaf. In June 1999, several Shi'a opposition groups reported that the Government had instituted a new program in the predominantly Shi'a districts of Baghdad that use food ration cards to restrict where individuals could pray. The ration cards, part of the United Nations oil-for-food program, reportedly are checked when the bearer enters a mosque and are printed with a notice of severe penalties for those who attempt to pray at an unauthorized location. Shi'a expatriates who reported this policy believe that it is

aimed not only at preventing unauthorized religious gatherings of Shi'a, but at stopping Shi'a adherents from attending Friday prayers in Sunni mosques, a practice many pious Shi'a have turned to because their own mosques remain closed.

The Government consistently interferes with religious pilgrimages, both of Iraqi Muslims who wish to make the Hajj to Mecca and Medina and of Iraqi and non-Iraqi Muslim pilgrims who wish to travel to holy sites in Iraq.

In 1998 the U.N. Sanctions Committee offered to disburse vouchers for travel and expenses to pilgrims making the Hajj, but the Government rejected this offer. In 1999 the Sanctions Committee offered to disburse funds to cover Hajj-related expenses via a neutral third party; the Government again rejected the offer. Following the December 1999 passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1284 (UNSCR 1284), which exempted flights for Hajj pilgrimage travelers from general sanctions (overland travel to exit Iraq always had been permitted), the Sanctions Committee again sought to devise a protocol to facilitate the payment for individuals making the journey. Following passage of UNSCR 1284, the Sanctions Committee proposed to issue \$250 in cash and \$1,750 in travelers checks to each individual pilgrim to be distributed at the U.N. office in Baghdad in the presence of both U.N. and Iraqi officials. No Iraqi pilgrims were able to take advantage of the available funds or, in 2000, the permitted flights, because government officials stated that they would accept the funds only in the form of cash paid to the central bank, a requirement that would have violated U.N. sanctions.

Twice each year—on the 10th day of the Muslim month of Muharram and 40 days later in the month of Safar—Shi'a pilgrims from throughout the country and around the world seek to commemorate the death of the Imam Hussein in the city of Karbala. The Government for several decades has interfered with these Ashura holiday commemorations, preventing processions on foot into the city. In 1998, 1999, and 2000, violent incidents were reported between Iraqi pilgrims and Ba'ath party members and security forces enforcing the ban.

In May 2000, the Ba'ath Party organization reportedly issued orders prohibiting the walking pilgrimage to Karbala. Travelers later reported that security troops opened fire on pilgrims who had intended to walk from al-Najaf to Karbala as part of the 40th day ritual.

Some devout Shi'a, wishing to avoid confrontation, have tried to select other significant days in the Muslim calendar for their pilgrimage. In 1998 Grand Ayatollah Mohammad al-Sadr announced that the 15th of Sha'baan—the anniversary of the birth of the Twelfth Imam (which fell in November that year)—would be an appropriate date for pilgrimage to Karbala; however, the Government reportedly prevented pilgrims from entering the city. Shi'a expatriates report that groups as small as 10 to 20 pilgrims attempting to make their way into the city at other times have been arrested. Shi'a sources report that Ba'ath Party militia forces clashed with Shi'a pilgrims attempting to commemorate Ashura in May 1998. The interference reportedly was especially severe at Karbala, Basra, and the al-Thawra district of Baghdad.

In past years, the Government has denied visas to many foreign pilgrims for the Ashura. In 1999 the Government reportedly charged foreign Shi'a pilgrims \$900 for bus passage and food from Damascus to Karbala, a trip that normally would cost about \$150.

The Government does not permit education in languages other than Arabic and Kurdish. Public instruction in Syriac, which was announced under a 1972 decree, has never been implemented. Thus, in areas under government control, Assyrian and Chaldean children are not permitted to attend classes in Syriac. In northern areas under Iraqi Kurdish control, classes in Syriac have been permitted since the 1991 uprising against the Government. By October 1998, the first groups of students were ready to begin secondary school in Syriac in the north, but some Assyrian sources reported that regional Iraqi Kurdish authorities refused to allow the classes to begin. Details of this practice (for example, the number of students prepared to start secondary courses in Syriac and the towns where they were located) were not available, and Kurdish regional authorities denied engaging in this practice. There were no reports of elementary school instruction in Syriac being hindered in northern Iraq.

Assyrian religious organizations have claimed that the Government applies apostasy laws in a discriminatory fashion. Assyrians are permitted to convert to Islam, whereas Muslims are forbidden to convert to Christianity.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government for decades has conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, and protracted arbitrary arrest against the religious leaders and



followers of the majority Shi'a Muslim population and has sought to undermine the identity of minority Christian (Assyrian and Chaldean) and Yazidi groups.

Despite supposed legal protection of religious equality, the regime has repressed severely the Shi'a clergy and those who follow the Shi'a faith. Forces from the Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat), General Security (Amn al-Amm), the Military Bureau, Saddam's Commandos (Fedayeen Saddam), and the Ba'ath Party have murdered senior Shi'a clerics, desecrated Shi'a mosques and holy sites (particularly in the aftermath of the 1991 civil uprising), arrested tens of thousands of Shi'a, interfered with Shi'a religious education, prevented Shi'a adherents from performing their religious rites, and fired upon or arrested Shi'a who sought to take part in their religious processions. Security agents reportedly are stationed at all the major Shi'a mosques and shrines and search, harass, and arbitrarily arrest worshipers.

Shi'a groups reported numerous instances of religious scholars—particularly in the internationally renowned Shi'a academic center of Najaf—being subjected to arrest, assault, and harassment during the period covered by this report. This follows years of government manipulation of the Najaf theological schools. As reported by Amnesty International in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the Government systematically deported tens of thousands of Shi'a (both Arabs and Kurds) to Iran, claiming erroneously that they were of Persian descent. According to Shi'a sources, religious scholars and Shi'a merchants who supported the schools financially were prime targets for deportation. In the 1980's, during the Iran-Iraq war, it was reported widely that the Government expelled and denied visas to thousands of foreign scholars who wished to study at Najaf. After the 1991 popular uprising, the Government relaxed some restrictions on Shi'a attending the schools; however, this easing of restrictions was followed by an increased government crackdown on the Shi'a religious establishment, including the requirement that speeches by imams in mosques be based upon government-provided material that attacked fundamentalist trends.

Since the 1980's, the Government reportedly has attempted to eliminate the senior Shi'a religious leadership (the Mirjaiyat) through murder, disappearances, and summary execution. Since January 1998, the killings of three internationally respected Shi'a clerics (and an attempt on the life of a fourth) have been widely attributed to government agents by international human rights activists, other governments, and Shi'a clergy in Iran and Lebanon. Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Murtada al-Borojoudi, age 69, was killed in April 1998. Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Mirza Ali al-Gharawi, age 68, was killed in July 1998. Ayatollah Sheikh Bashir al-Hussaini escaped an attempt on his life in January 1999. Grand Ayatollah Mohammad al-Sadr, age 66, was killed in February 1999.

Former U.N. Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur for Iraq, Max Van Der Stoel, sent a letter in 1999 to the Government expressing his concern that the killings might be part of an organized attack by the Government against the independent leadership of the Shi'a community. The Government has not responded to Van Der Stoel's inquiries.

In the aftermath of these killings, the Government stepped up repressive activities in the south and in other predominantly Shi'a areas to prevent mourning observances and popular demonstrations. As part of this campaign, two Shi'a scholars in Baghdad, Sheikh Hussain Suwai'dawi and Sheikh Ali al-Fraijawi, reportedly were executed in July 1998.

In April 1999, the Government executed four Shi'a men for the al-Sadr slaying after a closed trial. Shi'a religious authorities and opposition groups objected to the trial process and contend that the four executed men were innocent. At least one of the four, Sheikh Abdul Hassan Abbas Kufi, a prayer leader in Najaf, was reportedly in prison at the time of the killing. The Shi'a press reported in January 1999 that he had been arrested on December 24, 1998. The three others executed with Kufi were Islamic scholar Ahmad Mustapha Hassan Ardabili, Ali Kathim Mahjan, and Haider Ali Hussain. The condition of Ali al-Musawi, another Shia cleric accused of complicity in al-Sadr's death, was unknown. According to a report submitted to the Special Rapporteur in September 1999, another of al-Sadr's sons, Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr, was arrested later in the year along with a large number of theological students who had studied under the Ayatollah. Nineteen followers of al-Sadr reportedly were executed toward the end of 1999, including Sheikh Muhammad al-Numani, Friday imam Sheikh Abd-al-Razzaq al-Rabi'i, assistant Friday imam Kazim al-Safi, and students from a religious seminary in al-Najaf.

Although a funeral for al-Sadr was prohibited, spontaneous gatherings of mourners took place in the days after his death. Government security forces used excessive force in breaking up these illegal religious gatherings. Throughout the country, security forces used automatic weapons and armored vehicles to break up demonstrations, killing, injuring, and arresting hundreds of protesters.

In the aftermath of al-Sadr's killing the Shi'a religious community is in a precarious state. Of the three generally acknowledged senior Shi'a clerics, Grand Ayatollah Ali as-Seistani is forbidden to lead prayers and remains home bound in Najaf as a result of attempts on his life; Ayatollah Mohammed Sayeed al-Hakim is forbidden to lead prayers at the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf; and the status of Ayatollah Hussein Bahr al-Aloom in Kufa is not known. Many scholars at the Shi'a religious schools in Najaf reportedly have been arrested, as have many of al-Sadr's religious appointees throughout the country. These restrictions and abuses had an adverse effect on the development of a new set of Shi'a leaders.

The al-Sadr killing intensified Shi'a anger at the ruling Sunni minority and led to more severe government repression of the Shi'a and bolder actions by the Shi'a resistance against the regime—including grenade and rocket attacks on security headquarters, Ba'ath Party offices, and presidential residences in Baghdad, as well as small arms attacks in many parts of the capital. For example, the al Amin, Nuwab ad-Dubbat, and al Naft districts of Baghdad reportedly have remained in a heightened state of alert every Friday since al-Sadr's death.

During the period covered by this report, Shi'a and opposition sources with close ties to individuals in the south, such as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the Dawa organization, report that regular armed forces, the Republican Guard, Saddam's Commandos, and ad hoc formations of Ba'ath Party members have conducted deliberate ground sweeps and artillery attacks against Shi'a civilians.

Reports of military operations against Shi'a civilians also increased notably in the summer of 1998, after the killings of Ayatollahs Ali al Gharawi and Sheikh al Borojoudi. In numerous incidents during 1998, security forces injured and summarily executed Shi'a civilians, burned Shi'a homes, confiscated land belonging to Shi'a, and arbitrarily arrested and detained scores of Shi'a.

On January 14, 1999, according to a report from SCIRI, security officials reportedly arrested Sheikh Awas, imam of the Nasiriyah city mosque. Shortly after the arrest of Sheikh Awas, hundreds of Shi'a congregation members reportedly marched on the security directorate to demand that Awas be released immediately to them. Security forces allegedly opened fire on the unarmed crowd with automatic weapons and also threw hand grenades. Five persons were killed, 11 were wounded, and 300 were arrested. The security services subsequently banned Friday prayer in Nasiriyah.

The Human Rights Organization in Iraq (HROI) reported that 1,093 Shi'a were arrested in June 1999 in Basrah alone. The Iraqi National Congress reports that tanks from the Hammourabi Republican Guard division attacked the towns of Rumaitha and Khudur in June 1999 after residents protested the systematic misdistribution of food and medicine to the detriment of the Shi'a. Fourteen villagers were killed, over 100 arrested, and 40 homes were destroyed. On June 29, 1999, SCIRI reported that 160 homes in the Abul Khaseeb district near Basra were destroyed.

In several incidents in 1999, security forces killed and injured Shi'a congregants who gathered to protest closures of various Shi'a mosques.

Security forces also have forced Shi'a inhabitants of the southern marshes to relocate to major southern cities and to areas along the Iranian border. Former Special Rapporteur van Der Stoel described this practice in his February 1999 report, adding that many other persons have been transferred to detention centers and prisons in central Iraq, primarily in Baghdad. The Government reportedly also continued to move forcibly Shi'a populations from the south to the north to replace Kurds, Turkomen, and Assyrians, who had been expelled forcibly from major cities.

The military also continued its water-diversion and other projects in the south. The Government's claim that the drainage is part of a land reclamation plan to increase the acreage of arable land and spur agricultural production is given little credence. Hundreds of square miles have been burned in military operations. The former U.N. Special Rapporteur noted the devastating impact that draining the marshes has had on the culture of the Shi'a marsh Arabs. SCIRI claims to have captured government documents that detail the destructive intent of the water diversion program and its connection to "strategic security operations," economic blockade, and "withdrawal of food supply agencies."

The Government's diversion of supplies in the south limited the Shi'a population's access to food, medicine, drinking water, and transportation. According to the former U.N. Special Rapporteur and opposition sources, thousands of persons in Nasiriyah and Basra provinces were denied rations that should have been supplied under the U.N. oil-for-food program. In these provinces and in Amarah province, access to food allegedly is used to reward regime supporters and silence opponents. Shi'a groups report that, due to this policy, the humanitarian condition of Shi'a in

the south continued to suffer despite a significant expansion of the oil-for-food program.

The Government continued to hold numerous religious detainees and prisoners. The Government reportedly continued to target Shi'a Muslim clergy and their followers for arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. While Shi'a are not the only group targeted in this way (others, including Kurds and secular regime opponents, are targeted for ethnic and political reasons), the Shi'a are the primary group targeted based on their religion. It is likely that Shi'a Muslims constitute the majority of the prison population in the country.

While no firm statistics are available, observers estimate the number of security detainees to be in the tens of thousands. Some individuals have been held for decades. Others who have remained unaccounted for since their arrests may have died or been executed secretly years ago. It is difficult to produce an accurate list of persons in prison for their religious beliefs. In 1998 and 1999, hundreds of prisoners, many of them Shi'a, reportedly were executed.

The Government to execute summarily its perceived opponents and Shi'a leaders. Those few citizens able to protest the arrests and executions have persisted in attempts at documentation. Opposition groups, including SCIRI, have provided detailed accounts of summary executions, including the names of hundreds of persons killed.

Certain prisons are well known for their routine mistreatment of prisoners, including those persons imprisoned for their religious beliefs.

The former Special Rapporteur and others have reported that the Government has engaged in various abuses against the country's 350,000 Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, especially in terms of forced movements from northern areas and repression of political rights.

Most Assyrians live in the northern governorates, and the Government often has suspected them of "collaborating" with Iraqi Kurds. In the north, Kurdish groups often refer to Assyrians as Kurdish Christians. Military forces destroyed numerous Assyrian churches during the 1988 Anfal Campaign and reportedly executed and tortured many Assyrians. Both major Kurdish political parties have indicated that the Government occasionally targets Assyrians as well as ethnic Kurds and Turkomen for expulsion from Kirkuk, where it is seeking to Arabize the city.

There is evidence that the Government in the past compelled Yazidis to join in domestic military action against Muslim Kurds. Captured government documents included in a 1998 Human Rights Watch report describe special all-Yazidi military detachments formed during the 1988-89 Anfal campaign to "pursue and attack" Muslim Kurds. The Government also has targeted the Yazidis in the past. For example, 33 members of the Yazidi community of Mosul, arrested in July 1996, still are unaccounted for.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country's cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity is not reflected in its political and economic structure. Various segments of the Sunni Arab community, which itself constitutes a minority of the population, effectively have controlled the Government since independence in 1932.

Shi'a Arabs, the religious majority of the population, have long been economically, politically, and socially disadvantaged. Like the Sunni Kurds and other ethnic and religious groups in the north, the Shi'a Arabs of the south have been targeted for particular discrimination and abuse by the Government, ostensibly because of their opposition to the Government.

Assyrian groups reported several instances of mob violence by Muslims against Christians in the north in recent years. Assyrians continue to fear attacks by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a Turkish-based terrorist organization operating against indigenous Kurds in northern Iraq. Christians in the country report feeling caught in the middle of intra-Kurdish fighting. In December 1997, six Assyrians died in an attack near Dohuk by the PKK. Some Assyrian villagers have reported being pressured to leave the countryside for the cities as part of a campaign by indigenous Kurdish forces to deny the PKK access to possible food supplies.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iraq and thus is not able to raise directly with the Government the problems of severe restrictions on religious freedom and other human rights abuses. However, the U.S. Government makes its position clear in public statements and in diplomatic contacts with other states.

The President regularly discusses the problems experienced by Shi'a, Christian, and other religious groups in his periodic reports to Congress on Iraq. The Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, in testimony before Congress on Iraq, has highlighted the situation of persons in the south. The State Department spokesperson has issued statements criticizing the deaths of Ayatollahs al-Gharawi, al-Borojourni, al-Sadr, and the attempt on the life of Ayatollah al-Hussaini. The Voice of America has broadcast several editorials dealing with the human rights abuses committed against religious groups by the Iraqi Government.

It is the policy of the United States to encourage a change of regime in Iraq. Through the State Department's Office of the Special Coordinator for the Transition of Iraq, the United States is in frequent contact with Iraqi democratic opposition groups, including religiously oriented Shi'a, Sunni, and Christian groups. All of the groups designated as eligible for assistance under the Iraq Liberation Act have indicated their strong support for religious freedom and tolerance.

In March 2000, for the eighth consecutive year, the United States joined other members of the U.N. Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), to call on the U.N. Secretary General to send human rights monitors to "help in the independent verification of reports on the human rights situation in Iraq." However, the Iraqi Government continued to ignore these calls. As in the past, it did not allow the U.N. Special Rapporteur to visit, nor did it respond to his requests for information. It continued to defy calls from various U.N. bodies to allow the Special Rapporteur to visit the southern marshes and other regions. Denied entry to Iraq, the Special Rapporteur has based his reports on the Government's human rights abuses on interviews with recent émigrés from Iraq, interviews with opposition groups with contacts in Iraq, and other interviews, as well as on published reports.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Iraq a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

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## ISRAEL

*(The religious freedom situation in the occupied territories is discussed in the annex appended to this report.)*

Israel has no constitution; however, the law provides for freedom of worship, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The Declaration of Independence describes the country as a "Jewish and democratic state." The overwhelming majority of non-Jewish citizens are Arabs and they are subject to various forms of discrimination. It is not clear that whatever discrepancies exist in the treatment of various communities in Israeli society are based on religion per se.

In June 2000, the Government proposed a plan to help redress some of the gaps in government spending for Arab communities. In March 2000, the High Court of Justice ruled that the Government's use of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) to develop public land was discriminatory, as the JNF's by-laws prohibit sale or lease of land to non-Jews.

Evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Reform and Conservative Jews suffered some incidents of harassment, threats, and vandalism during the period covered by the report; members of these religious groups complained that the police were slow to investigate these incidents. Relations between different religious groups often are strained, both between Jews and non-Jews, as well as among the different branches of Judaism.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

Israel has no constitution; however, the law provides for freedom of worship, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Declaration of Independence describes the country as a “Jewish and democratic state.”

The Government recognizes religious groups that were in the country before 1948. The Government recognizes 5 religious groups, including 10 Christian groups.

*Religious Demography*

Approximately 80 percent of citizens are Jewish (a significant majority are non-Orthodox), approximately 16 percent are Muslims, 2 percent are Christians, and 1.5 percent are Druze. The non-Jewish population is concentrated in the north, east-central, and southern parts of the country. The population includes small but growing numbers of adherents of nonrecognized evangelical Christian groups and members of other faiths, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The overwhelming majority of non-Jewish citizens are Arabs and they are subject to various forms of discrimination. It is not clear that whatever discrepancies exist in the treatment of various communities in Israeli society are based on religion per se. Israeli Arabs and other non-Jewish Israelis are, in fact, free to practice their religions.

The Government does not provide Israeli Arabs, who constitute 20 percent of the population, with the same quality of education, housing, employment opportunities, and social services as Jews. In addition, government spending and financial support are proportionally far lower in predominantly non-Jewish areas than in Jewish areas. According to the press, an Interior Ministry report released during 1998 noted that non-Jewish communities receive significantly less government financial support than their Jewish counterparts. According to several Arab nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s), recent government budget cuts fell disproportionately on Arab communities. In June 2000, the Government proposed a plan to narrow some of these gaps; however, this plan was not implemented by mid-2000.

Israeli-Arab organizations have challenged the Government’s “Master Plan for the Northern Areas of Israel,” which listed as priority goals increasing the Galilee’s Jewish population and blocking the territorial contiguity of Arab villages and towns, on the grounds that it discriminates against Arab citizens.

The Government provides proportionally greater financial support to religious and civic institutions in the Jewish sector compared with those in the non-Jewish sector, i.e., Muslim, Christian, and Druze. For example, only 2 percent of the Ministry of Religious Affairs budget goes to the non-Jewish sector. The High Court of Justice heard a case in 1997 alleging that this budgetary allocation constitutes discrimination. In 1998 the Court ruled that the budget allocation constituted “prima facie discrimination” but that the plaintiff’s petition did not provide adequate information about the religious needs of the various communities. The Court refused to intervene in the budgetary process on the grounds that such action would invade the proper sphere of the legislature.

Each recognized religious community has legal authority over its members in matters of marriage and divorce. Secular courts have primacy over questions of inheritance, but parties, by mutual agreement, may bring cases to religious courts. Jewish and Druze families may ask that some family status matters, such as alimony and child custody in divorces, be adjudicated in civil courts as an alternative to religious courts. Christians may only ask that child custody and child support be adjudicated in civil courts as an alternative to religious courts. Muslims have no recourse to civil courts in family-status matters. Legislation passed in 1996 allows the rabbinical courts to sanction either party who is not willing to grant a divorce.

In civic areas where religion is a determining criterion, such as the religious courts and centers of education, non-Jewish institutions routinely receive less state support than their Jewish counterparts. The status of a number of Christian organizations with representation in Israel heretofore has been defined by a collection of ad hoc arrangements with various government agencies. Several of these organizations seek to negotiate with the Government in an attempt to formalize their status.

Other examples of discrimination against non-Jewish citizens are not directly related to freedom to worship. There were some areas of improvement. For example, in March 2000, the High Court of Justice ruled that the Government could neither allocate land on the basis of religion or nationality, nor allocate land to the quasi-governmental Jewish National Fund, since the by-laws of the organization prohibit sale or lease of land to non-Jews. The effect of this ruling, and other decisions made

by the current Government to lessen discrimination against non-Jews, remains unclear.

The Government has recognized Jewish holy places under the 1967 Protection of Holy Sites Law. The Government states that it also protects the holy sites of other faiths. The Government also states that it has provided funds for some holy sites of other faiths.

Missionaries are allowed to proselytize, although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints voluntarily refrains from proselytizing under an agreement with the Government. A 1977 anti-proselytizing law prohibits anyone from offering or receiving material benefits as an inducement to conversion; there have been no reports of its enforcement. Bills that would have restricted proselytizing further were introduced and passed their preliminary readings in 1997 and 1998 with the support of some government ministers; however, no further action was taken before the dissolution of the Knesset following the May 1999 elections. They are not expected to be enacted if reintroduced in the Knesset. Christian and other evangelical groups asserted that the draft bills were discriminatory and served to intimidate Christian groups.

The Government confers automatic citizenship and residence rights to Jewish immigrants, their families, and Jewish refugees under the Law of Return. This law does not apply to non-Jews or to persons of Jewish descent who have converted to another faith.

The Government designates religion on national identity documents, but not on passports.

Orthodox Jewish religious authorities have exclusive control of Jewish marriages, divorces, and burials. They do not recognize marriages or conversions to Judaism performed in Israel by non-Orthodox rabbis. Many Jews object to this exclusive control, and it has been at times a source of serious controversy in society, particularly in recent years, as thousands of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union have brought with them family members not recognized as Jewish by Orthodox authorities. Many Jews who wish to marry in secular or non-Orthodox religious ceremonies do so abroad, and the Ministry of Interior recognizes such marriages.

Under the Government's current interpretation and implementation of Jewish personal status law, a Jewish woman is not allowed to initiate divorce proceedings without her husband's consent; consequently there are hundreds of so-called "agunot" in the country who cannot remarry or have legitimate children because their husbands either have disappeared or refused to grant a divorce. This issue does not affect citizens' right to worship.

Some rabbis are actively seeking a solution that is consistent with Jewish law. Legislation passed in 1995 broadened the civil sanctions made available to rabbinical courts in cases where a wife has ample grounds for divorce—such as abuse—but the husband refuses to agree. However, in some cases rabbinical courts have failed to invoke these sanctions.

Members of nonrecognized religions (particularly evangelical Christians) suffer difficulties conducting marriages and funerals, although informal arrangements provide some relief.

A group of more than 100 Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform women continued a long legal battle to hold women's prayer services at the Western Wall during the period covered by this report; in May 2000, the High Court ruled that women may pray aloud and wear prayer shawls at the Western Wall. Both legislators and the State Prosecutor's office sought to overturn the ruling; however, they were not successful as of mid-2000.

The Government generally continued to permit Muslim citizens to make the Hajj during the period covered by this report. However, for security reasons, the Government imposes some restrictions on its Muslim citizens who perform the Hajj, including requiring that they be over the age of 30. The Government does not allow them to return if they leave the country without formal permission. The Government justifies these restrictions on the grounds that Saudi Arabia remains officially at war with Israel and that travel to Saudi Arabia therefore is considered subject to security considerations.

Evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Reform and Conservative Jews complained of inadequate or slow police response to incidents of harassment, assaults, theft, and vandalism during the period covered by this report (also see Section II).

There were no prosecutions of the over 120 cases filed by Jehovah's Witnesses in 1998 and 1999. Police arrested several members of Jehovah's Witnesses for questioning on the basis of complaints by members of ultra-orthodox groups during the period covered by the report.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between different religious groups often are strained, both between Jews and non-Jews, as well as among the different branches of Judaism. Tensions between Jews and non-Jews exist primarily as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as Israel's control of access to sites holy to Christians and Muslims. Friction between Christians and Muslims in the Arab community increased during the period covered by this report, primarily as a result of a dispute about a plot of land alleged to belong to the Waqf (Islamic religious trust) in Nazareth. The Government took steps to resolve this dispute with only partial success. Animosity between secular and religious Jews continued to grow during the period covered by this report. Non-Orthodox Jews have complained of discrimination and intolerance.

There are numerous nongovernmental organizations working on dialog between different religions. Interfaith dialog often is linked to the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Societal attitudes towards conversion are particularly negative. Religious and lay leaders of most religions largely are hostile to missionary activity. Muslims consider any conversion from Islam to be apostasy.

Harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses declined; however, members of this group continued to complain of inadequate police efforts to investigate outstanding complaints of harassment, assault, theft, and vandalism, reportedly by two ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups, Yad L'achim and Lev L'achim. Ultra-Orthodox groups sought unsuccessfully to convince a company to fire an employee who is a member of Jehovah's Witnesses during the period covered by this report.

Evangelical Christian and other religious groups suffered some incidents of often-violent harassment (also see Section I). In June 2000, a meeting hall used by evangelical Christians (who describe themselves as "Messianic Jews") reportedly was vandalized by members of an ultra-Orthodox group. Such incidents are not limited to non-Jews. Instances of ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups verbally or physically harassing Jewish citizens for "immodest dress" or other violations of their interpretation of religious law are not uncommon and increased during the period covered by this report.

In July 1999, the Baptist House Center in Jerusalem was vandalized by unknown assailants who spread tar on the front and along the sides of the building, as well as defacing the entrance to the sanctuary.

In September 1999, Kol Israel, a state radio station, agreed for the first time to broadcast advertisements paid for by the Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism in response to a Supreme Court petition.

Relative to their numbers, Israeli Arabs are underrepresented in the student bodies and faculties of most universities, and in higher-level professional and business ranks. Well-educated Arabs often are unable to find jobs commensurate with their level of education. Arab Ph.D.'s suffer the greatest problems in this regard. A small number of Israeli Arabs have risen to responsible positions in the civil service, generally in the Arab departments of government ministries. In 1994 a civil service commission began a 3-year affirmative action program to expand that number, but it had only modest results. The Government has allocated only very limited resources to enforce landmark 1995 legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment.

In practice Israeli Arab citizens who do not serve in the military and therefore cannot obtain security clearances are not allowed to work in companies with defense contracts or in security-related fields. The Israeli Druze and Circassian communities are subject to the military draft, and although some have refused to serve, the overwhelming majority accept service willingly. Some Bedouin and other Arab citizens who are not subject to the draft serve voluntarily. Those not subject to the draft have less access than other citizens to those social and economic benefits for which military service is a prerequisite or an advantage, such as housing, new-household subsidies, and government or security-related industrial employment. Under a 1994 government policy decision, the social security child allowance for parents who did

not serve in the military and did not attend a yeshiva (including Arabs) was increased to equal the allowance of those who had done so.

Israeli Arab groups allege that many employers use the prerequisite of military service to avoid hiring non-Jews. For example, in 1997 a Haifa employment agency advertised for Arabic-speaking telephone operators and listed military service as a prerequisite. An Israeli Arab group noted that there was no clear justification for this requirement and threatened to file a civil suit under a law prohibiting employment discrimination and defining requirements unrelated to actual work as discriminatory. The employment agency eventually agreed to change the advertisement and run it again.

Arab children make up about one-quarter of the public school population, but government resources for them are not proportionate to those for Jewish children. Many schools in Arab communities are dilapidated and overcrowded, lack special education services and counselors, have poor libraries, and have no sports facilities. Arab groups also note that the public school curriculum stresses the country's Jewish culture and heritage.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy consistently raised issues of religious freedom with the Government at working levels with the Foreign Ministry, the police, and the Prime Minister's office. These contacts focused particularly on complaints from Jehovah's Witnesses about poor police response to incidents of violent harassment and dealt with specific incidents as well as the general problem of insufficient police response. In December 1999, Robert Seiple, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, met with government officials, religious leaders, and NGO representatives to discuss a number of religious freedom issues.

Embassy representatives, including the Ambassador, routinely meet with religious officials. These contacts included meetings with Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i leaders at a variety of levels.

Embassy officials maintain a dialog with nongovernmental organizations that follow human and civil rights issues, including religious freedom. These included the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Israel Religious Action Center, Adalah, and many others.

Embassy representatives attended meetings of groups seeking to promote interfaith dialog, including the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, the Anti-Defamation League, and others.

#### THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (INCLUDING AREAS SUBJECT TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY)

The Palestinian Authority (PA)<sup>1</sup> has no constitution, and no single law in force protects religious freedom; however, it generally respects religious freedom in practice. Although there is no official religion in the occupied territories, Islam is treated de facto as the official religion.

Israel has no constitution; however, the law provides for freedom of worship, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion. There were unconfirmed reports that Muslim converts to Christianity were subjected to mistreatment by individual PA officials and in Palestinian society.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the PA in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem investigated allegations of harassment and discrimination against Christians in the occupied territories.

<sup>1</sup>The May 1994 Gaza-Jericho agreement and the September 1995 interim agreement transferred authority over portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip from Israel to the Palestinian Authority (PA). Israel continues to control certain civil functions and is responsible for all security in portions of the Occupied Territories categorized as Area C, which includes the Israeli settlements. In areas known as Area B, the PA has jurisdiction over civil affairs and shares security responsibilities with Israel. The PA has control over civil affairs and security in Area A. The PA also has jurisdiction over some civil affairs in Area C.

The West Bank and the Gaza Strip are governed by a combination of Ottoman law, British Mandate law, Jordanian law (in the West Bank), Egyptian law (in the Gaza Strip), Israeli law, Palestinian law, and, in matters of personal status like marriage, divorce, and inheritance, various sets of religious law.



## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has no constitution, and no single law in force protects religious freedom; however, the PA respects religious freedom in practice. Although there is no official religion in the occupied territories, Islam is treated de facto as the official religion.

Israel has no constitution; however, the law provides for freedom of worship, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The draft Palestinian Basic Law proposes that Islam be recognized as the official religion; however, under the draft law, freedom of worship is to be provided to adherents of other faiths. The draft law also stipulates that "the principles of Islamic Shari'a are a main source of legislation."

Churches in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza can be subdivided into three general categories: (1) churches recognized by the status quo agreements reached under Ottoman rule in the late 19th century; (2) Protestant and evangelical churches that arrived between the late 19th century and 1967, which are fully tolerated by the PA, although not officially recognized; and (3) a small number of churches that became active within the last decade whose legal status is more tenuous.

The first group of churches is governed by the 19th century status quo agreements, which the PA respects and which specifically established the presence and rights of the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Assyrian, Greek Catholic, Coptic, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. The Episcopal and Lutheran Churches were added later to the list. These churches and their rights were accepted immediately by the PA just as the British, Jordanians, and Israelis had done before. Like Islam with Shari'a courts, these religious groups are permitted to have ecclesiastical courts whose rulings are considered legally binding on personal status issues and some land issues. Civil courts do not adjudicate on such matters.

The second group of churches, including the Assembly of God, Nazarene Church, and some Baptist churches, has unwritten understandings with the PA based on the principles of the status quo agreements. They are permitted to operate freely and are able to perform certain personal status legal functions, such as issuing marriage certificates. These churches thus far have been unsuccessful in securing de jure recognition. However, they operate with de facto recognition and maintain cooperation from the PA.

The third group of churches consists of a small number of proselytizing churches, including Jehovah's Witnesses and some evangelical Christian groups. These groups have encountered opposition in their efforts to obtain recognition, both from Muslims, who oppose their proselytizing, and Christians, who fear that the new arrivals may disrupt the status quo. These churches generally operate unhindered by the PA.

The Palestinian Authority does not make overt attempts at encouraging interfaith dialog. However, it supported the Bethlehem 2000 project, which attracted several hundred thousand visitors of many faiths to the city. The project was a symbol of Muslim-Christian cooperation. In March 2000, several thousand persons, including Chairman Arafat and senior PA officials attended a public mass in Bethlehem conducted by Pope John Paul II.

The PA makes an effort to maintain good relations with the Christian community. Within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there is a portfolio covering Christian Affairs, and Chairman Arafat has a Christian Affairs advisor. The established churches also have formed a legal committee to address issues of religious freedom in the draft Basic Law, and the PA has been willing to consider suggestions made by this committee. Christian leaders participated in the design of a religious studies curriculum for Christian students in the public schools.

*Religious Demography*

The great majority of the Palestinian residents of the occupied territories are Sunni Muslims. A majority of Christians are Greek Orthodox, with a significant number of Roman Catholics and smaller groups of Greek Catholics, Protestants, Syrians, Armenians, Copts, Maronites, and Ethiopian Orthodox. Christians are concentrated in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and the Bethlehem area. In addition, there is a Samaritan community of approximately 550 persons located on Mount Gerazim near Nablus, and two small communities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bethlehem and Ramallah. Jewish Israelis reside in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The PA generally does not restrict freedom of religion, and there is no pattern of PA discrimination against or harassment of Christians. However, since the estab-

lishment of the PA, there have been periodic allegations that a small number of Muslim converts to Christianity sometimes are subject to societal discrimination and harassment by PA officials, including detention and questioning by security forces. During the period covered by this report, there were several unconfirmed allegations that converts to Christianity were subjected to societal discrimination and harassment by PA officials, including detention and questioning by security forces. In some cases, conversion may have been only one of several factors influencing the mistreatment. In previous years, the PA stated that it investigated similar allegations, but it did not share or publicize the results of these investigations with any outside party.

The PA generally does not prohibit or punish individuals for speaking about their religious beliefs. In September 1999, PA officials issued an order arrogating the establishment of religious radio and television stations to the PA alone. The PA limited speech on religious subjects in some instances. For example, in December 1999, the Ministry of the Interior ordered a Christian television station in Bethlehem to limit its broadcast of Christmas music. The radio station disobeyed the directive, and Ministry officials ordered the station to close. The PA subsequently agreed to drop the issue and allowed the radio station to operate freely.

In practice, the PA requires that individuals be affiliated at least nominally with some religion. Religion must be declared on identification papers, and all personal status legal matters must be handled in either Shari'a (Islamic law) or Christian ecclesiastical courts.

Foreign missionaries operate in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. These include a handful of evangelical Christian pastors who seek to convert Muslims to Christianity. While they maintain a generally low profile, the PA is aware of their activities and generally does not restrict them.

Christians participate in Palestinian official life. A number of PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat's senior advisors are Christians. Six Christians and one Samaritan sit on the 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council in seats set aside for representatives of these religions. Occasionally, the PA takes steps to protect Christians.

The PA requires that religion be taught in PA schools. Until recently, only courses on Islam were offered and Christian students were excused from them. In 1998 the PA asked representatives of the Christian community to develop a Christian studies curriculum in order to implement a compulsory religious curriculum for Christian students. According to PA officials, the curriculum for grades one through six are complete and are scheduled to be implemented in 2001. The PA also is formulating its first indigenous school curriculum that will include a civic education component, which will cover issues of religious tolerance. According to PA officials, the curriculum for grades one through six are complete and will be implemented in academic year 2000–2001.

PA officials are not required to swear a religious oath upon taking office. Witnesses in PA courtrooms are required to swear on a religious book, such as the Koran or the Bible.

In July 1999, the PA prevented Jewish settlers from entering Joseph's Tomb in PA-controlled Nablus due to the fact that the settlers brought a cabinet onto the site without coordinating with the PA. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) responded by preventing PA officials from entering Nablus. The issue was resolved when the IDF agreed to remove the cabinet and the checkpoint into Nablus.

Palestinians residing outside of the Jerusalem municipal boundary are required to obtain a permit to enter the city, even to visit a holy site; the permits often are denied and Israeli security personnel also sometimes deny permit holders access to Jerusalem. Israel has instituted these permit requirements in order to address its security concerns.

The Israeli Government permits all faiths to operate schools and institutions. Religious publications are subject to the Publications Laws. In accordance with Orthodox Jewish practice, men and women pray separately at the Western Wall, Judaism's most sacred site. Reform and Conservative Jews have challenged this practice and seek to pray at the Western Wall in mixed-gender groups. A group of women from all branches of Judaism continued a long legal battle to pray aloud and to wear prayer shawls at the Western Wall; in May 2000, the Israeli High Court ruled that they may do so. Israeli legislators and the State Prosecutor's office sought to overturn the ruling; however, they were not successful as of mid-2000.

A 1995 ruling by the Israeli High Court of Justice allows small numbers of Jews under police escort to pray on the Temple Mount, which is the location of two Muslim holy places and also the former site of the First and Second Jewish Temples. Other organized Jewish religious activity on the Temple Mount is prohibited on public safety grounds.

In May 2000, officials in the Israeli Ministry for Religious Affairs reportedly threatened to reevaluate relations with the Jerusalem Greek Orthodox Patriarchate if it did not discipline a Christian cleric for expressing his political views to a group of Christian pilgrims. As of mid-2000, the Patriarchate had not disciplined the cleric.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In January 2000, members of the Preventive Security Organization (PSO) seized a Jericho church compound, which was under the auspices of the American-based Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOP). The PSO handed control of the church to members of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) of the Russian Orthodox Church. Although the church compound had been under the control of the ROCOP for decades, members of the MP disputed the ROCOP's property claim, maintaining that the MP is the true owner of this compound. The PSO security forces seized the church without first conducting legal proceedings to determine the question of ownership. Two nuns affiliated with the ROCOP held a vigil inside the compound to protest the PSO seizure of the property; PSO personnel allegedly harassed the nuns. Following negotiations, the PSO allowed the MP and ROCOP temporarily to divide the compound between them until legal ownership can be determined in the courts.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the occupied territories.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal by any authorities to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Generally, there are amicable relations between Christians and Muslims. Both Christians and Muslims state that when tensions do surface, it is because of provocative actions by one side or the other aimed at undermining current social arrangements. Palestinians say that if Christians try to demand a change in status quo arrangements, tensions may result. Likewise, Muslims who disregard Christian sensitivities may trigger social tension. Relations between Jews and non-Jews, as well as among the different branches of Judaism, often are strained. Tensions between Jews and non-Jews exist primarily as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as Israel's control of access to sites holy to Christians and Muslims. Animosity between secular and religious Jews increased during the period covered by this report.

Non-Orthodox Jews have complained of discrimination and intolerance. On June 24, 2000, unidentified persons set fire to a conservative synagogue in Jerusalem; eyewitnesses reportedly stated that the perpetrators were Orthodox Jews. On June 25, 2000, unidentified persons attempted arson and looted Torah scrolls at the Messianic Shepherd of Israel congregation in Jerusalem; police personnel arrested two Orthodox Jewish youth for this incident.

Periodically, there are incidents of Christian-Muslim tension in the occupied territories. Tensions have arisen over Christian-Muslim romantic relationships or when Christians have erected large crosses in the public domain. Christians in the Bethlehem area also have complained about Muslims settling there and constructing homes illegally on land not zoned for building.

During the period covered by this report, there were periodic reports that some Christian converts from Islam who publicize their religious beliefs have been harassed. Converts complained that they were mistreated and threatened. The draft Palestinian Basic Law specifically forbids discrimination against individuals based on their religion; however, the PA did not take any action against persons accused of harassment.

Instances of ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups verbally or physically harassing Jewish citizens for "immodest dress" or other violations of their interpretation of religious law occurred during the period covered by this report.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem maintains an ongoing, high-level dialog with PA officials, including Chairman Arafat, on human rights issues, including issues of religious freedom and the circumstances of Christians in the West Bank and Gaza. PA officials worked cooperatively with the U.S. Consulate on a number of issues, including PA treatment of Christian converts from Islam; how religious minorities

are to be represented in the new school curriculums; and how the draft Basic Law addresses Shari'a and the issue of a national religion.

The U.S. Consulate plays a reinforcing role in the PA's dialog with local Christian groups on minority religion representation in the new curriculums.

The Consulate also maintains contacts with the representatives of both the Islamic Waqf—an Islamic trust and charitable organization that owns and manages large amounts of Muslim land including the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem—and the various Christian churches in Jerusalem. In January 2000, the Consulate intervened in a dispute involving the ROCOR, the MP, and the Palestinian Security Organization. U.S. Consulate officials stated numerous times to PA officials that competent legal authorities should resolve the issue of ownership of the Jericho church compound seized by the PSO.

The Consulate continues to investigate allegations of unequal treatment of religious minorities. It made inquiries to try to ascertain the facts of a land dispute case in which the PA allegedly acquiesced to the confiscation of Christian-owned land by Muslims; there was no basis found for these allegations during the period covered by this report.

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## JORDAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, provided that religious practices are consistent with "public order and morality;" however, the Government imposes some restrictions on freedom of religion, and citizens may not always be allowed to practice the religion of their choice. According to the Constitution, Islam is the state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between Muslims and Christians in the country generally are amicable. Bahai's face some societal and official discrimination.

U.S. Embassy officials discussed religious freedom issues with government authorities on a number of occasions.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for the safeguarding of "all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order or morality;" however, the Government imposes some restrictions on freedom of religion. Citizens may not always be allowed to practice the religion of their choice. According to the Constitution, Islam is the state religion.

Islamic institutions are managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Trusts, which appoints imams and subsidizes certain activities sponsored by mosques. Religious institutions, such as churches that wish to receive official government recognition, must apply to the Prime Ministry for registration. The Protestant denominations registered as "societies" come under the jurisdiction of one of the recognized Protestant churches for purposes of family law, such as divorce and child custody. The Government does not recognize a number of religions.

#### *Religious Demography*

Over 90 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim. Official government figures estimate that Christians make up 4 percent of the population; however, government and Christian officials privately estimate the true figure to be closer to 2 percent. Neither Islam nor the Government recognizes religious faiths other than the three main monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In addition, not all Christian denominations have been accorded official government recognition. Officially recognized denominations include the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic (Melkite), Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Catholic, Assyrian, Anglican, Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventist, United Pentecostal, and Presbyterian Churches. Other churches, including the Baptist Church, the Free Evangelical Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Assembly of God, and the Christian Missionary Alliance, are registered with the Ministry of Justice as "societies" but not as churches. There are also small numbers of Shi'a and Druze, as well as adherents of the Baha'i Faith. There are no statistics available on citizens who do not adhere to any particular religious faith.

With few exceptions, there are no major geographic concentrations of particular religious groups. The city of Husn, in the north, is mostly Christian, and Fuheis, near Amman, is also predominantly Christian. Madaba and Karak, both south of Amman, have significant Christian populations.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government does not interfere with public worship by the country's Christian minority. However, although the majority of Christians are allowed to practice freely, some activities, such as proselytizing or encouraging conversion to the Christian faith—both considered legally incompatible with Islam—are prohibited. Christians are subject to aspects of Shari'a (Islamic law) that designate how inheritances are distributed.

The Government does not recognize Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Christ, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, but each denomination is allowed to conduct religious services and activities without interference.

The Government does not recognize the Baha'i Faith as a religion but does not prohibit the practice of the faith. However, Baha'is face both official and societal discrimination. The Government does not record the bearer's religion on national identity cards issued to Baha'is, nor does it register property belonging to the Baha'i community; Baha'is are not permitted to establish schools, places of worship, or cemeteries. Adherents of the Baha'i Faith are considered as Muslims for purposes of family and inheritance law. Unlike Christian denominations, the Baha'i community does not have its own court to adjudicate personal status and family matters. Baha'i personal status matters are heard in Shari'a courts.

Non-Jordanian Christian missionaries operate in the country but are subject to restrictions. Christian missionaries may not proselytize Muslims. In late 1999 and early 2000, U.S.-affiliated Christian mission groups in the country complained of increased bureaucratic difficulties, including refusal by the Government to renew residence permits.

The Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS), a Christian training school for pastors and missionaries, applied in August 1998 for a permit to purchase land on which to construct a seminary and campus. In April 1999, permission was granted to purchase the land on the condition that the JETS register and receive accreditation from the Ministry of Education. Pending such registration, authorities suspended renewal of the residence permits of all of the seminary's 36 foreign students (who come from 10 foreign countries), and 2 members of the faculty. In 1998 and early 1999, some noncitizen Arab Muslim students were deported or asked to leave the country as a result of their association with the JETS. For several months in late 1999, the Ministry of Interior relented and issued visas and residence permits to the students and staff of the JETS. However, in December 1999, the Ministry again began refusing to issue or to renew visas or resident permits for students and staff of the school until it received registration from the Ministry of Education. To date, the school has not been registered and the Ministry's refusal to issue visas has affected 14 of 140 students and 4 staff members at the school.

In April and September 1999, an employee of a small language school in Amman applied for a residence permit from the Ministry of Interior. His application was denied on both occasions, reportedly because government officials believed that he had been trying to convert Muslims to Christianity. He reapplied in April 2000 and is awaiting a response from the Government.

In September 1999, the authorities threatened to revoke the license of a businessman who conducts radio listener surveys and follows up with those respondents who report an interest in Christianity.

In January 2000, General Intelligence Directorate (GID) officials contacted an official of Life Agape—an organization associated with the Baptist Church, which distributes Bibles and conducts Bible studies—and asked him to sign a letter stating that he would not "deal with Muslims." The official was told that if he did not sign the letter his office would be closed. In February 2000, police brought the letter to the Life Agape office, escorted the official to the police station, and then brought him to meet with the governor of the Amman municipality. The following day, the governor closed the Life Agape office; no reason for the closure was specified on the governor's order.

The Government notes individuals' religions (except for Baha'is) on the national identity card and "family book" (a national registration record issued to the head of every family that serves as proof of citizenship) of all citizens.

The Constitution provides that congregations have the right to establish schools for the education of their own members "provided that they comply with the general provision of the law and be subject to the control of government in matters relating to their curricula and orientation."

In December 1999, the municipality of Amman closed the Roy and Dora Whitman Academy—a small, nonprofit school founded by U.S.-affiliated missionaries in Amman to provide affordable English-language education for foreign student—on the basis that it was not registered with the Ministry of Education. The board of the academy had been in the process of registering the school since 1997 and had been led to believe that registration would be forthcoming in the spring of 2000. After being contacted by embassies representing a number of countries, the Ministry of Education assisted the school in properly fulfilling registration requirements. In April 2000, the school was officially registered and once again began teaching students.

Shari'a is applied in all matters relating to family law involving Muslims or the children of a Muslim father, and all citizens, including non-Muslims, are subject to Islamic legal provisions regarding inheritance.

In February 2000, criticism of a poem entitled "Yusef," which was included in a book of poems published in May 1999 by Muslim poet Musa Hawamdeh, began to circulate in mosques in Amman. Radical Islamists escalated the criticism of the poem and the poet, calling for the poet to be killed if he refused to recant the poem and for him to be divorced forcibly from his Muslim wife. Criticism of the poem from the Ministers of Religious Affairs and Information followed, and by the end of March 2000 the Government banned the book in which the offending poem was published. In June 2000, Hawamdeh was summoned to a Shari'a court to face allegations of apostasy; he was charged by the head of court clerks with denying Koranic facts and defaming a prophet. The complainant requested that Hawamdeh publicly retract the controversial statements in his poem and requested that the Shari'a judge order that he divorce his wife and lose his rights to inherit property or manage his own wealth. The Shari'a court referred the case to a civil court, which had not ruled on the case as of June 30, 2000. Apostasy is not punishable under the civil code; however, other charges, such as blasphemy, could be filed in civil court. In July 2000, Hawamdeh, without retracting any portion of his poem, was acquitted on all charges in both the Shari'a and criminal courts.

According to local press reports, a second book of poetry by Ziyad al-Anani was banned in April 2000; the book contained a poem that reportedly was offensive to Islam. The authorities did not bring charges against al-Anani and the book was published and distributed in Lebanon instead.

In June 2000, due to a dispute stemming from an intrachurch rivalry between the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the Antioch Orthodox Patriarchate, the Government closed an Arab Orthodox church in Amman that was aligned with the Antioch Patriarch in Damascus, Syria. The Government closed the church following a request from the local Orthodox hierarchy to enforce a 1958 law that grants the Jerusalem Patriarchate authority over all Orthodox churches in the country (also see Section II).

The law prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims. Conversion to the Muslim faith by Christians is allowed; however, a Muslim may not convert to another religion. Muslims who convert to other faiths complain of social and government discrimination. The Government does not fully recognize the legality of such conversions. Under Shari'a converts are regarded as apostates and legally may be denied their property and other rights. However, this principle is not applied in practice. Converts from Islam do not fall under the jurisdiction of their new religion's laws in matters of personal status and still are considered Muslims under Shari'a, although the reverse is not true. Shari'a prescribes a punishment of death for conversion; however, there is no equivalent statute under national law.

The Political Parties Law prohibits houses of worship from being used for political party activity. The law was designed primarily to prevent Islamist parliamentarians from preaching in mosques.

Two major government-sponsored institutions have been established to promote interfaith understanding: the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies and the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research (Al Bayt Foundation). Both institutions sponsor research, international conferences, and discussions on a wide range of religious, social, and historical questions from the perspective of both Muslims and Christians.

All minor children of a male citizen who converts to Islam are automatically considered to be Muslim. Adult children of a male Christian who has converted to Islam become ineligible to inherit from their father if they do not themselves convert to Islam. In cases where a Muslim converts to Christianity, the act is not legally recognized by the authorities, and the subject continues to be treated as a Muslim in matters of family and property law. Moreover, the minor children of a male Muslim who converts to Christianity continue to be treated as Muslims under the law.

Religious instruction is mandatory for all Muslim students in public schools. Christian and Baha'i students are not required to attend courses in Islam.

During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, all citizens, including non-Muslims, are discouraged from eating, drinking, or smoking in public or in vehicles and are discouraged strongly from dressing in a manner that is considered inconsistent with Islamic standards. Restaurants are closed during daylight hours unless specifically exempted by the Government and alcohol is not served except in those facilities catering specifically to tourists.

The security services detained approximately 100 persons, described in the press as "Islamists," during the period covered by this report. These detentions appear related to allegations of involvement in terrorist or strictly political activities rather than religious affiliation or belief.

The country's parliamentary election law—which grants disproportionate representation to rural and tribal districts—was enacted to limit the number of Islamists elected to Parliament. Many Islamists boycotted the 1997 parliamentary elections and have stated that in order for them to participate in the next parliamentary elections, the election law must be amended.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. However, according to Jordanian law the father of a child may restrict the child's travel. There reportedly are at least 35 cases of U.S. citizen children residing in Jordan against the will of their U.S. mothers, and perhaps many more. Under the law, these children automatically are considered Muslim because their fathers are Muslim.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between Muslims and Christians in the country are generally amicable. Relations within the Christian community sometimes are difficult, especially in regard to the evangelical Christian community. In September 1999, several evangelical organizations received anonymous facsimile transmissions that purported to be copies of a letter from a group of older, more established churches to the Prime Minister. The letter called for the Government to limit the rights of what it called "nonestablished" churches, referring to the country's small but cohesive evangelical community. In June 2000, due to a dispute stemming from an intrachurch rivalry between the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the Antioch Orthodox Patriarchate, the Government closed an Arab Orthodox church in Amman, which was aligned with the Antioch Patriarch in Damascus, Syria. The Government closed the church following a request from the local Orthodox hierarchy to enforce a 1958 law that grants the Jerusalem Patriarchate authority over all Orthodox churches in the country (also see Section I).

In general Christians do not suffer discrimination. Christians hold government positions and are represented in the media and academia approximately in proportion to their presence in the general population. Baha'is face some societal and official discrimination. Their faith is not recognized officially, and Baha'is are classified as Muslims on official documents, such as the national identity card (see Section I). Christian and Baha'i children in public schools are not required to participate in Islamic religious instruction.

Muslims who convert to other religions often face social ostracism, threats, and abuse from their families and Muslim religious leaders.

Employment applications occasionally contain questions about an applicant's religion.

In March 2000, Jordan University amended the student council election law, granting the university president the authority to appoint half of the university's 80-member student council, including the chair. This decision reportedly was made in order to curb the influence of Islamists on campus. In April 2000, many students—Islamists and non-Islamists—protested this decision. Islamist groups also called for a boycott of the elections on April 25, 2000 and some persons associated with these groups physically attempted to prevent students from voting.

During the period covered by this report, several newspaper articles were published that were critical of evangelical organizations.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials have raised religious freedom and other human rights issues with government authorities on a number of occasions. The Embassy's human rights officer has met frequently with members of the various religious and missionary communities in the country, as well as with private religious organizations. The Embassy's American Citizens' Services officer is in regular contact with members of the American missionary community in the country, many of whom serve as emergency wardens. In addition, the Ambassador was in contact with senior government officials throughout January, February, March, and April 2000. In February 2000, Congressman Charles Canady of Florida forwarded a letter signed by 63 members of Congress to King Abdullah, encouraging the Government to grant the JETS' request for registration with the Ministry of Education.

## KUWAIT

Islam is the state religion; although the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, the Government places some limits on this right.

There was no significant change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations among the different religions in society. There were no new reports of vandalism or other actions against the country's Christian churches. One violent incident in April 2000 against a Muslim citizen was attributed to Sunni Muslim extremists and was criticized harshly by the Government and society at large. Complaints by the Shi'a community about continued difficulties in obtaining approval for the construction of new mosques attracted national attention when approval for the construction of a mosque in the Al-Qurain area was denied by the municipality of Kuwait after it had been pending for 9 years. In May 2000, there were indications that the national Government would reverse this decision.

The U. S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

Islam is the state religion; although the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, the Government places some limits on this right. The Constitution also provides that the State protect the freedom to practice religion in accordance with established customs, "provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals." The Constitution states that Shari'a (Islamic law) is "a main source of legislation."

The procedures for registration and licensing of religious groups are unclear. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has official responsibility for overseeing religious groups. Nevertheless, in reality officially recognized churches must deal with a variety of government entities, including the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (for visas and residence permits for pastors and other staff) and the Kuwaiti Municipality (for building permits). While there reportedly is no official government "list" of recognized churches, seven Christian churches have at least some sort of official recognition that enables them to operate openly. These seven churches have open "files" at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, allowing them to bring in the pastors and staff necessary to run their churches. Further, by tradition three of the country's churches are widely recognized as enjoying "full recognition" by the Government and are allowed to operate compounds officially designated as churches: the Catholic Church (which includes two separate churches), the Anglican Church, and the National Evangelical Church of Kuwait (Protestant). The other four churches reportedly are allowed to operate openly, hire employees, invite religious speakers, etc., all without interference from the Government, but their compounds are, according to government records, registered only as private homes. The churches themselves appear uncertain about the guidelines or procedures for recognition. Some have argued that these procedures are purposely kept vague by the Government so as to maintain the status quo. All other churches and religions have no legal status but are allowed to operate in private homes.

The procedures for registration and licensing of religious groups also appear to be connected with government restrictions on nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), religious or otherwise. In 1993 all unlicensed organizations were ordered by the Council of Ministers to cease their activities. This order has never been enforced; however, since that time all but three applications by NGO's have been frozen.



There were reports that in the last few years at least two groups have applied for permission to build their own churches, but the Government has not yet responded to their requests.

#### *Religious Demography*

Among a total population of 2.2 million, approximately 1.5 million persons are Muslim, including the vast majority of the 750,000 citizens. The remainder of the overall population consists of the large foreign labor force and over 100,000 stateless persons, most of whom are Muslim. The ruling family and many prominent families belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. The total Sunni Muslim population is approximately 1 million, 500,000 of whom are citizens. The remaining 30 to 40 percent of Muslim residents (approximately 500,000) are Shi'a, 250,000 of whom are citizens. Estimates of the nominal Christian population range from 250,000 to 500,000 (including approximately 200 citizens, most of whom belong to 12 large families).

The Christian community consists of the Roman Catholic Diocese, with 2 churches and an estimated 75,000 members (Maronite Christians also worship at the Catholic cathedral in Kuwait city); the Anglican (Episcopalian) Church, with 115 members (several thousand other Christians use the Anglican Church for worship services); the National Evangelical Church (Protestant), with 3 main congregations (Arabic, English, and "Malayalee")

and 15,000 members (several other Christian denominations also worship at the National Evangelical Church Compound); the Greek Orthodox Church (referred to locally as the "Roman Orthodox" Church), with 3,500 members; the Armenian Orthodox Church, with 4,000 members; the Coptic Orthodox Church, with 60,000 members; and the Greek Catholic (Eastern Rite) Church, whose membership totals are unavailable.

There are many other unrecognized Christian denominations in the country, with tens of thousands of members. These denominations include Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Marthoma, and the Indian Orthodox Syrian Church.

There are also members of religions not sanctioned in the Koran, such as Hindus (100,000 members), Sikhs (10,000), Baha'is (400), and Buddhists (no statistics available).

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Shi'a are free to conduct their traditional forms of worship without government interference; however, members of the Shi'a community have complained about the scarcity of Shi'a mosques due to the Government's slowness or failure to grant approval for the construction of new Shi'a mosques as well as the repair of existing mosques. The community was particularly critical in May 2000 when the municipality rejected a 9-year-old petition for construction of a Shi'a mosque in the Al-Qurain area. Although the municipality apparently relented due to direct government intervention, there are still complaints about the lack of sufficient Shi'a mosques. There are approximately 30 Shi'a mosques compared with the 1,300 Sunni mosques in the country. However, Shi'a have noted some improvement in recent years in that a small number of approvals have been granted for the construction of Shi'a mosques.

Shi'a leaders also have complained that Shi'a who aspire to serve as imams are forced to seek appropriate training and education abroad due to the lack of Shi'a jurisprudence courses at Kuwait University's College of Islamic Law. They also have expressed concern that certain pending proposed legislation within the National Assembly does not take beliefs specific to the Shi'a into account.

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, National Evangelical, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, and Greek Catholic Churches are able to operate freely on their compounds, holding worship services without government interference. These leaders also state that the Government generally has been supportive of their presence, even providing police security and traffic direction as needed. Other Christian denominations (including Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, Marthoma, and Indian Orthodox), while not recognized legally, are allowed to operate in private homes or in the facilities of recognized churches. Members of these congregations have reported that they are able to worship without government interference, provided that they do not disturb their neighbors and do not violate laws regarding assembly and proselytizing.

Members of religions not sanctioned in the Koran, such as Hindus and Buddhists, may not build places of worship, but are allowed to worship privately in their homes without interference from the Government.

The Government prohibits missionaries from proselytizing to Muslims; however, they may serve non-Muslim congregations. The law prohibits organized religious

education for religions other than Islam, although this law is not enforced rigidly. Informal religious instruction occurs inside private homes and on church compounds without government interference. However, there were reports that government “inspectors” periodically visit public and private schools outside of church compounds to ensure that no religious teaching other than Islam takes place.

The Government does not permit the establishment of non-Islamic publishing companies or training institutions for clergy. Nevertheless, several churches do publish religious materials for use solely by their congregations. Further, some churches, in the privacy of their compounds, provide informal instruction to individuals interested in joining the clergy.

A private company, the Book House Company Ltd., is permitted to import significant amounts of Bibles and other Christian religious material—including, as of early 2000, videotapes and compact discs—for use solely among the congregations of the country’s recognized churches. The Book House Company is the only bookstore that has an import license to bring in such materials, which also must be approved by government censors. There have been reports of private citizens having non-Islamic religious materials confiscated by customs officials upon arrival at the airport.

Although there is a small community of Christian citizens, a law passed in 1980 prohibits the naturalization of non-Muslims. However, citizens who were Christians before 1980 (and children born to families of such citizens since that date), are allowed to transmit their citizenship to their children.

According to the law, a non-Muslim male must convert to Islam when he marries a Muslim woman if the wedding is to be legal in Kuwait. A non-Muslim female does not have to convert to Islam to marry a Muslim male, but it is to her advantage to do so. Failure to convert may mean that, should the couple later divorce, the Muslim father would be granted custody of any children.

In April 2000, the Government formed a joint interministerial committee to study ways to control extremist groups (see Section II).

The law requires jail terms for journalists who ridicule religion. In the period covered by this report, Islamists used this law to threaten writers with prosecution for publishing opinions deemed insufficiently observant of Islamic norms. In January 2000, the Kuwaiti Court of Misdemeanors found two female Kuwaiti authors, Alia Shuaib and Leila Al-Othman, guilty of writing books that were blasphemous and obscene. Shuaib and Al-Othman were sentenced to 2 months in prison which could be suspended upon payment of a \$160 (50 Kuwaiti dinars) fine. On March 26, a Kuwaiti appeals court acquitted Shuaib of the charges of blasphemy and publishing works that ridicule religion. Al-Othman’s conviction of using indecent language was upheld. The court’s judgments represented the latest in a series of cases brought by Islamists against secular authors. The court did not provide explanations for its rulings.

In early 2000, a Vatican representative arrived in the country to establish a permanent mission. The mission, which currently is headed by a charge d’affaires who temporarily resides at the Roman Catholic Church, also is to represent Vatican interests in the smaller Gulf States and Yemen. The Church views the Government’s acquiescence to establish relations with the Vatican as significant in terms of government tolerance of Christianity.

There was no significant change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversions of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. There have been cases in which U.S. citizen children have been abducted from the United States and not allowed to return (under the law, the father receives custody in such cases, and his permission is required for the children to leave the country); however, there were no reports that such children were forced to convert to Islam, or that forced conversion was the reason that they were not allowed to return.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general, there are amicable relations among the different religions, and citizens generally are open and tolerant of other religions. While there is a small minority of ultraconservatives opposed to the presence of non-Muslim groups, there were no new reports of vandalism or other actions against the country’s Christian churches during the period covered by this report. There was one reported incident in April 2000 of vigilante justice by extremists against a female Muslim university student,

who allegedly was beaten by three men for un-Islamic behavior. Subsequent reports claimed that up to seven members of the extremist group Takfir Wa Hijra (Brand Infidels and Expel Them) were involved in the assault and had been involved in similar incidents in recent years. The accused were arrested within days and the Government formed a joint ministerial committee to study ways to control such groups. However, the evidence supporting the student's charges did not hold up in court and on June 12, Kuwait's criminal court acquitted the accused suspects. While reactions to this incident varied, in general, most citizens were critical of the extremists' actions.

During the same month, unidentified gunmen fired shots at a "husseiniya" (religious meeting place for Shi'a). Although the identities of the assailants were never determined, the incident contributed to a perception by some that extremists (the presumed attackers) are becoming increasingly disruptive to society.

While some discrimination based on religion reportedly occurs on a personal level, most observers agree that it is not widespread. There is a perception among some domestic employees and other members of the unskilled labor force, particularly nationals from Southeast Asian countries, that they would receive better treatment from employers as well as society as a whole if they converted to Islam. However, others do not see conversion to Islam as a factor in this regard.

The conversion of Muslims to other religions is a very sensitive matter. While it is reported that such conversions have occurred, they have been done quietly and discreetly. Muslim conversions that become public are likely to trigger hostility within society, as demonstrated by a 1996 case in which the convert received death threats.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

U.S. Embassy officials frequently meet with representatives from Sunni, Shi'a, and various Christian groups. Intensive monitoring of religious issues has long been an embassy priority. Embassy officers have met with most of the leaders of the country's recognized Christian churches, along with representatives of various unrecognized faiths. Such meetings have afforded embassy officials the opportunity to learn the status and concerns of these groups.

## LEBANON

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Discrimination based on religion is built into the system of government. There are no legal barriers to proselytizing; however, traditional attitudes and edicts of the clerical establishment discourage such activity.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The State is required to ensure the free exercise of all religious rites with the caveat that public order not be disturbed. The Constitution also provides that the personal status and religious interests of the population be respected. The Government permits recognized religions to exercise authority over matters pertaining to personal status such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. There is no state religion; however, politics are based on the principle of religious representation, which has been applied to every conceivable aspect of public life.

A group that seeks official recognition must submit its dogma and moral principles for government review to ensure that such principles do not contradict popular values and the Constitution. The group must ensure that the number of its adherents is sufficient to maintain its continuity. Alternatively, religious groups may apply to obtain recognition through existing religious groups. Official recognition conveys certain benefits, such as tax-exempt status and the right to apply the religion's codes to personal status matters.

### *Religious Demography*

Because the matter of religious balance is such a sensitive political issue, a national census has not been conducted since the founding of the modern Lebanese State. Consequently, there is an absence of accurate data on the relative percentages of the population of the major religions and groups. Most observers believe that Muslims make up the majority, but they do not represent a homogenous group. There also is a variety of other religious groups, primarily from the Christian and Jewish religions.

There are 18 officially recognized religious groups. Their ecclesiastical and demographic patterns are extremely complex. Divisions and rivalries between groups date back as far as 15 centuries, and are still a factor today. The pattern of settlement has changed little since the 7th century, although there has been a steady numerical decline in the number of Christians compared to Muslims. The main branches of Islam are Shi'a and Sunni. Since the 11th century there has been a sizable Druze presence, concentrated in rural, mountainous areas east and south of Beirut. The smallest Muslim minorities are the Alawites, and the Ismaili ("Sevener") Shi'a order. The "Twelver" Shi'a, Sunni, and Druze each have state-appointed clerical bodies to administer family and personal status law through their own religious courts, which are subsidized by the State. The Maronites are the largest of the Christian groups. They have had a long and continuous association with the Roman Catholic Church, but have their own patriarch, liturgy, and customs. The second largest group is the Greek Orthodox Church (composed of ethnic Arabs who maintained a Greek-language liturgy). The remainder of the Christians are divided among Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox (Gregorians), Armenian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox (Jacobites), Syrian Catholics, Assyrians (Nestorians), Chaldeans, Copts, evangelicals (including Protestant groups such as the Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Friends), and Latins (Roman Catholic). Most Christian groups also administer their own family and personal status law. State recognition is not a legal requirement for religious practice. For example, although Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus are not officially recognized, they are allowed to practice their faith without government interference; however, they legally may not marry, divorce, or inherit in the country.

The Government allows private religious education. There is a vigorous debate on the issue of public religious education, but no final curriculum has been adopted. Publishing of religious materials in different languages is permitted. The country's religious pluralism and climate of religious freedom have attracted many refugees fleeing religious persecution in neighboring states. They include Kurds, Shi'a, and Chaldeans from Iraq and Coptic Christians from Egypt and Sudan.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding by supporting a committee on Islamic-Christian dialog, which is cochaired by a Muslim and a Christian, and includes representatives of the major religious groups. Leading religious figures who promote Islamic-Christian dialog and ecumenicism are encouraged to visit and are received by government officials at the highest levels.

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The unwritten "National Pact" of 1943 stipulates that the President, the Prime Minister, and the Speaker of Parliament be a Maronite Christian, a Sunni Muslim, and a Shi'a Muslim, respectively. The Taif Accord, which ended Lebanon's 15-year civil war in 1990, reaffirmed this arrangement but resulted in increased Muslim representation in Parliament and reduced the power of the Maronite President. The Accord called for the ultimate abolition of political sectarianism in favor of "expertise and competence." However, little substantive progress has been made in this regard. A "Committee for Abolishing Confessionalism," called for in the Taif Accord, has not yet been formed. Christians and Muslims are represented equally in the Parliament. Seats in the Parliament and Cabinet, and posts in the civil service, are distributed proportionally among the 18 recognized groups.

Each religious group has its own courts for family law matters, such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. State recognition is not a legal requirement for religious practice. For example, although Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus are not officially recognized, they are allowed to practice their faith without government interference; however, they legally may not marry, divorce, or inherit in the country.

The Government does not require citizens' religious affiliations to be indicated on their passports; however, the Government requires that religious affiliation be encoded on national identity cards.

An individual may change his religion if the head of the religious group he wishes to join approves of this change. There are different personal status codes for each of the 18 officially recognized religious groups. Administered by representatives of the groups, these codes govern many areas of civil law, including marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. Many families have relatives who belong to different

religious communities, and intermarriage is not uncommon; however, intermarriage may be difficult to arrange in practice between members of some groups because there are no procedures for civil marriage. An attempt in 1998 by then-President Elias Hrawi to forward legislation permitting civil marriage failed in the face of opposition from the religious leadership of all confessions.

Article 473 of the Penal Code stipulates that one who "blasphemes God publicly" will face imprisonment for up to a year.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In September 1999, Marcel Khalife, a leading singer and songwriter, was accused of insulting Islam for incorporating lines from a poem based on verses from the Koran into a song he recorded in 1995. An indictment was issued charging the singer with blasphemy. Most political and religious leaders, with the exception of the Sunni Grand Mufti of the Republic, criticized this action. Khalife was acquitted of the charges on December 15, 1999.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Discrimination based on religion is built into the system of government. The amended Constitution of 1990 embraces the principle of abolishing religious affiliation as a criterion for filling government positions, but few practical steps have been taken to accomplish this. One notable exception is the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which, through universal conscription and an emphasis on professionalism, has significantly reduced the role of confessionalism (or religious sectarianism) in that organization.

Citizens still are struggling with the legacy of a 15-year civil war fought along religious lines. Some of the harshest fighting of the war occurred within religious groups.

There are no legal barriers to proselytizing; however, traditional attitudes and edicts of the clerical establishment discourage such activity.

The Committee of Islamic-Christian Dialog remains the most significant institution for fostering amicable relations between religious communities. It has received the Archbishop of Canterbury and leading representatives of other groups on ecumenical missions to promote understanding between Muslims and Christians. Clerics play a leading role in many ecumenical movements worldwide. For example, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch, Aram I, is the moderator for the World Council of Churches. The Imam Musa Sadr Foundation has also played a role in fostering the ecumenical message of Musa Sadr, a Shi'a cleric who disappeared in Libya in 1978.

On October 3, 1999, one person was killed when a bomb exploded in a Maronite church in an eastern Beirut suburb. There were no arrests made in this case during the period covered by this report.

Throughout the fall of 1999, approximately 6 random bombings were carried out against Orthodox churches and shops that sold liquor; the bombings took place in the northern city of Tripoli and in surrounding areas. The Government suspected that radical Sunni extremists carried out the bombings in retaliation for Russian military operations in Chechnya. Police officials detained and allegedly tortured a number of Sunni youths for suspected involvement in these bombings; however, the youths later were released due to a lack of evidence.

In December 1999, Sunni extremists killed four LAF soldiers in an ambush in the northern region of Dinniyeh after these soldiers attempted to arrest two Sunni Muslims allegedly involved in a series of church bombings. On December 31, 1999, the LAF retaliated by launching a massive military operation against Sunni insurgents in north Lebanon. Five civilians, 7 LAF soldiers, and 15 insurgents were killed in this operation.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. policy supports the preservation of pluralism and religious freedom, and the U.S. Embassy advances that goal through contacts at all levels of society, public remarks, embassy public affairs programs, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programming. The issue of political sectarianism remains a delicate one. The United States supports the principles of the Taif Accord and embassy staff

regularly discuss the issue of sectarianism with political, religious, and civic leaders. Embassy staff members meet periodically with the leadership—both national and regional—of officially recognized groups, all of whom have a long tradition of meeting with foreign diplomats and discussing issues of general public interest. The Embassy regularly attends events sponsored by the Committee on Islamic-Christian Dialog. The U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom visited the country in April 2000 to discuss this issue with the religious leadership and with local lawyers and activists. The Embassy sponsored the visit to Beirut of the founder of the American Muslim Council to speak before the interfaith committee about Islam in America. USAID programs in rural areas of the country also require civic participation, often involving villages of different religious backgrounds, with the aim of promoting cooperation between religions.

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## LIBYA

The Government restricts freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Information regarding relations among the country's different religious groups is limited. According to recent reports, persons rarely are harassed because of their religious practices unless such practices are perceived as having a political dimension or motivation.

The U.S. Government has no official presence in the country and maintains no dialog with the Government.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Government restricts freedom of religion.

The country's leadership has been known to state publicly its preference for Islam. In an apparent effort to eliminate all alternative power bases, the regime has banned the once powerful Sanusiyya Islamic order. In its place, Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar Al-Qadhafi established the Islamic Call Society (ICS), which is the Islamic arm of the Government's foreign policy and is active throughout the world. The ICS also is responsible for relations with other religions, including the Christian churches in the country. The ICS's main purpose is to promote a moderate form of Islam that reflects the religious views of the Government, and there are reports that Islamic groups whose beliefs and practices are at variance with the state-approved teaching of Islam are banned. Although most Islamic institutions are under government control, prominent families endow some mosques; however, they generally remain within the government-approved interpretation of Islam.

#### *Religious Demography*

The country is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim (97 to 98 percent). There are small Christian communities, composed almost exclusively of foreigners. There is a small Anglican community, made up mostly of African immigrant workers in Tripoli, which is part of the Egyptian Diocese; the Anglican Bishop of Libya is resident in Cairo. There are Union churches in Tripoli and Benghazi. There are an estimated 40,000 Roman Catholics who are served by two Bishops—1 in Tripoli (serving the Italian community) and 1 in Benghazi (serving the Maltese community). Catholic priests and nuns serve in all the main coastal cities, and there is one priest in the southern city of Sebha. Most of them work in hospitals and with the handicapped; they enjoy good relations with the Government. There are also Coptic and Greek Orthodox priests in both Tripoli and Benghazi.

In March 1997, the Vatican established diplomatic relations with Libya, stating that Libya had taken steps to protect freedom of religion. The Vatican hoped to be able to address more adequately the needs of the estimated 50,000 Christians in the country.

There still may be a very small number of Jews. Most of the Jewish community, which numbered around 35,000 in 1948, left for Italy at various stages between 1948 and 1967. The Government has been rehabilitating the "medina" (old city) in Tripoli and has renovated the large synagogue there; however, the synagogue has not reopened.

There are no known places of worship for other non-Muslim religions such as Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, and Buddhism, although adherents are allowed to practice

within the privacy of their home. Foreign adherents of these religions are allowed to display and sell religious items at bazaars and other gatherings.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government controls most mosques and Islamic institutions, and even mosques endowed by prominent families generally remain within the government-approved interpretation of Islam. According to recent reports, individuals rarely are harassed because of their religious practices, unless such practices are perceived as having a political dimension or motivation. However, Christians are restricted by the lack of churches; there is a government limit of one church per denomination per city. Members of some minority religions are allowed to conduct services. Christian churches operate openly and are tolerated by the authorities. The authorities reportedly have failed to honor a promise made in 1970 to provide the Anglican Church with alternative facilities when they took the property used by the Church. Since 1988 the Anglicans have shared a villa with other Protestant denominations. There continue to be reports of armed clashes between security forces and Islamic groups that oppose the current regime and advocate the establishment of a more traditional form of Islamic government.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Information on religious freedom is limited, although members of minority religions report that they do not face harassment by authorities or the Muslim majority on the basis of their religious practices.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States has no official presence in Libya, and consequently maintains no dialog with the Government on religious freedom issues.

# MOROCCO

Islam is the official religion and, although the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, in practice only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are tolerated officially. Baha'is face restrictions on the practice of their faith. The Government monitors the activities of mosques and places some restrictions on Christian religious materials.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations between majority and minority religions are amicable. Since July 23, 1999, when King Mohammed VI succeeded his father, the late King Hassan II, who ruled for 38 years, the new King has continued to uphold a tradition of respect for interfaith dialog. Converts to Christianity sometimes face social ostracism.

The U. S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides that Islam is the official religion, and designates the King as "Commander of the Faithful" with the responsibility of ensuring "respect for Islam." Although the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are tolerated in practice; however, in 1996 a small foreign Hindu community received the right to perform cremations and to hold services. Other foreign communities enjoy similar religious privileges. However, Baha'is face restrictions on the practice of their faith. The Government monitors the activities of mosques.

The Government does not license or approve religions or religious organizations. The Government provides tax benefits, land and building grants, subsidies, and customs exemptions for imports necessary for the observance of the major religions.

### *Religious Demography*

Ninety-nine percent of citizens are Sunni Muslims. The Jewish community numbers approximately 5,000 persons and predominantly resides in the Casablanca and Rabat urban areas, as well as some smaller cities throughout the country. The foreign Christian community (Roman Catholic and Protestant) consists of a little more than 5,000 members. Most reside in the Casablanca and Rabat urban areas. Also located in Rabat and Casablanca, the Baha'i community numbers 350 to 400 persons. There are few practicing atheists in the country; most atheists reportedly are university students.

The teaching of Islam in public schools benefits from discretionary funding in the Government's annual education budget, as do other curriculum subjects. The annual budget also provides funds for religious instruction to the parallel system of Jewish public schools. The Government has funded several efforts to study the cultural, artistic, literary, and scientific heritage of Moroccan Jews. In 1998 the Government created a chair for the study of comparative religions at the University of Rabat.

The Government regularly organizes events to encourage tolerance and respect among religions. In April and May 2000, the Government hosted the first meeting of the "Traveling Faculty of the Religions of the Book" at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. Royal counselor Andre Azoulay, a leading Jewish citizen, spoke of the importance of interfaith respect and dialog in front of major Islamic, Jewish, and Christian figures from around the world.

The Government annually organizes in May the "Fez Festival of Sacred Music," which includes musicians from many religions. The Government has organized in the past numerous symposiums among local and international clergy, priests, rabbis, imams and other spiritual leaders to examine ways to reduce religious intolerance and to promote interfaith dialog. Each year during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the King hosts colloquiums of Islamic religious scholars to examine ways to promote tolerance and mutual respect within Islam and between Islam and other religions.

### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The small Baha'i community has been forbidden to meet or participate in communal activities since 1983. However, during the period covered by this report, no members of the Baha'i community were summoned to the Ministry of the Interior for questioning concerning their faith and meetings, as had occurred in past years. For the second year in a row, there were no reports of Baha'is being denied passports because of their religion.

Islamic law and tradition call for strict punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions sometimes face social ostracism, and in the past a small number have faced short periods of questioning or detention by the authorities. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes; however, the authorities have jailed some converts on the basis of references to Koranic law.

Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is illegal. (According to Article 220 of the Penal Code, any attempt to stop one or more persons from the exercise of their religious beliefs, or attendance at religious services, is unlawful and may be punished by 3 to 6 months of imprisonment and a fine of \$10 (103 dirhams) to \$50 (515 dirhams). The Article applies the same penalty to "anyone who employs incitements in order to shake the faith of a Muslim or to convert him to another religion.") Foreign missionaries either limit their proselytizing to non-Muslims or conduct their work quietly. The Government cited the prohibition in the Penal Code on conversion in most cases in which courts expelled foreign missionaries.

During the period covered by this report, there were no known cases of foreigners being denied entry into the country because they were carrying Christian materials, as had occurred in 1998 and the first half of 1999.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs monitors Friday mosque sermons and the Koranic schools to ensure the teaching of approved doctrine. The authorities sometimes suppress the activities of Islamists but generally tolerate activities limited to the propagation of Islam, education, and charity. Security forces commonly close mosques to the public shortly after Friday services to prevent use of the premises for unauthorized political activity. The Government strictly controls authorization to construct new mosques. Most mosques are constructed using private funds.

Since the time of the French Protectorate (1912-1956), a small foreign Christian community has opened churches, orphanages, hospitals, and schools without any restriction or licensing requirement being imposed. Missionaries who conduct themselves in accordance with societal expectations largely are left unhindered. Those whose activities become public face expulsion.



The Government permits the display and sale of Bibles in French, English, and Spanish, but confiscates Arabic language Bibles and refuses licenses for their importation and sale, despite the absence of any law banning such books. Nevertheless, Arabic Bibles reportedly have been sold in local bookstores.

There are two sets of laws and courts—one for Jews and one for Muslims—pertaining to marriage, inheritance, and family matters. The family law courts are run, depending on the law that applies, by rabbinical and Islamic authorities who are court officials. Parliament authorizes any changes to those laws. Non-Koranic sections of Muslim law on personal status are applied to non-Muslim and non-Jewish persons. Alternatively, non-Muslim and non-Jewish foreigners in Morocco may refer to their embassies or consulates for marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other personal issues if they choose not to adhere to Moroccan law.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

After 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of King Hassan II, Islamist dissident Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine was allowed to leave his Sale home on May 16, 2000. Yassine's release came after a May 10 statement by the Minister of Interior before Parliament that the Sheikh "leaves and returns to his residence as he likes. He receives visitors and holds meetings." The Minister also said that Sheikh Yassine was free to take his case to court if he believed that his rights were being abused. Subsequent to the lifting of his house arrest, Sheikh Yassine received at his home leading council members of his Justice and Charity Organization (JCO) on May 17, attended a Sale mosque prayer service on May 19, and gave a May 20 press conference widely attended by domestic and foreign media representatives.

During the period covered by this report, books, articles, and audio cassettes published and produced by Yassine were sold at some bookstores. Editorials calling for the Sheikh's release prior to his liberation were published without impediment. The JCO maintains an active presence on university campuses and occasionally organized, prior to Yassine's release, protests of his lengthy house arrest. However, prominent members of the JCO are subject to constant surveillance and sometimes encounter problems obtaining passports and other necessary documents. In addition, after Yassine's release, the Government banned the JCO's popular summer camps, which were used to garner and increase support for the organization.

During the period covered by this report, officials of the Gendarmerie Royale summoned several members of the foreign Christian community for questioning concerning the practice of their faith. After 8 years of residence in the country, one U.S. citizen in the community failed to receive annual renewal of his resident's visa after Gendarmerie Royale officials began an investigation into his religious activities. The investigation reportedly is still underway. Currently the U.S. citizen faces no problem residing in, or exiting and returning to, the country.

Fewer than 50 Islamists are serving sentences for offenses that range from arms smuggling to participating in a bomb attack on a hotel in Marrakech. However, a small number of these prisoners remain in prison for having called for an Islamic state in 1983.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Tolerance is widespread, and relations between majority and minority religions are amicable. Foreigners attend religious services without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, and Jews live throughout the Kingdom in safety. While free expression of Islamic faith and even the free academic and theological discussion of non-Islamic religions are accepted on television and radio, public efforts to proselytize are frowned upon by society. Most citizens view such public acts as provocative threats to law and order in an overwhelmingly observant Muslim country. In addition, society expects public respect for the institutions and mores of Islam, although private behavior and beliefs are unregulated and unmonitored. Because many Muslims view the Baha'i Faith as a heretical offshoot of Islam, most members of the tiny Baha'i community maintain a low religious profile. However, Baha'is live freely and without fear for their persons or property, and some even hold government jobs, albeit discreetly.

Because the populace is overwhelmingly Muslim, because Islam is the religion of the State, and because the King enjoys temporal and spiritual authority through his role as "Commander of the Faithful," there is widespread consensus among Muslims about religious practices and interpretation. Other sources of popular consensus are the councils of ulemas, unofficial religious scholars who serve as monitors of the monarchy and the actions of the Government. Because the ulemas traditionally hold the power to legitimize or delegitimize kings through their moral authority, government policies closely adhere to popular and religious expectations. While dissenters such as Yassine and his followers challenge the religious authority of the King and call for the establishment of a government more deeply rooted in their vision of Islam, the majority of citizens do not appear to share their views.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

During the period covered by this report, embassy officers continued to raise religious freedom issues in an effort to help resolve the few outstanding cases of restrictions on religious freedom. Prior to the release of Sheikh Yassine, the Embassy discussed his house arrest with government interlocutors, Sheikh Yassine's lawyer, his family, and some of his associates. Similarly, embassy officers sought openly to meet directly with Sheikh Yassine prior to his release and were informed by credible sources that "as a matter of principle" he would not meet with either journalists or diplomats. Prior to and after Yassine's release, embassy officers who sought to meet with Sheikh Yassine, members of his family, and his close associates encountered no interference from the Government in seeking these contacts.

The U.S. Consulate in Casablanca investigated the case of the U.S. citizen who has not yet had his residence permit renewed. The Consulate ascertained from the police that no formal charges exist against the U.S. citizen. The Embassy currently remains in contact with the citizen.

The Ambassador and embassy officials also meet regularly with religious officials, including the Minister of Islamic Affairs, Islamic religious scholars, the leader of the Jewish community, and local Christian leaders and missionaries. The Embassy maintains contacts with the small Baha'i community as well.

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## WESTERN SAHARA

Although the Moroccan Constitution provides for freedom of religion, only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are tolerated in practice; however, several foreign communities enjoy some religious privileges.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Relations among religious believers were generally amicable.

The U. S. Embassy in Morocco discusses religious freedom issues in the overall context of the promotion of human rights in the Western Sahara.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Due to continuing Moroccan administrative control of the territory of the Western Sahara, conditions for religious freedom in that territory are similar to those found in the Kingdom of Morocco. Although the Moroccan Constitution provides for freedom of religion, only Islam, Christianity and Judaism are tolerated in practice; however, several foreign communities enjoy some religious privileges.

#### *Religious Demography*

Apart from a tiny foreign community working for the United Nations Interposition Force in the territory (known by its French acronym, MINURSO), the overwhelming majority of the population are Sunni Muslim.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the authorities' refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious believers were generally amicable.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Morocco discusses religious freedom issues in the overall context of the promotion of human rights in the Western Sahara.

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**OMAN**

Islam is the state religion, and the Basic Charter preserves the freedom to practice religious rites, in accordance with tradition, provided that it does not breach public order. The Government permits freedom of worship for non-Muslim residents. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Christian and Hindu worship is permitted, and Sultan Qaboos has given land for the construction of centers of worship for these religions. However, it is illegal to proselytize Muslims to abandon Islam. Islam is an integral part of the scholastic curriculum; however, non-Muslim students attending private schools are not required to study Islam.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

Islam is the state religion, which is affirmed by the 1996 Basic Charter. The 1996 Basic Charter provides that Shari'a (Islamic law) is the basis for legislation and preserves the freedom to practice religious rites, in accordance with tradition, provided that it does not breach public order. The Government permits freedom of worship for non-Muslims as well.

Non-Muslim religious organizations must be registered with the Government, and the Government restricts some of their activities.

*Religious Demography*

Most citizens are Ibadhi or Sunni Muslims, but there is also a minority of Shi'a Muslims. There is a small community of ethnically Indian Hindu citizens, and there is reportedly a very small number of Christians, who were originally from India or the Levant, and who have been naturalized.

Non-Muslims, the majority of whom are noncitizen immigrant workers from South Asia, are free to worship at churches and temples, some of which are built on land donated by the Sultan. There are many Christian denominations in Muscat, which use two plots of donated land. Two Catholic and two Protestant churches have been built on this land. Hindu temples also have been built on government-provided land. The Government also provided land for Catholic and Protestant missions in Sohar and Salalah.

*Governmental Restrictions on Freedom of Religion*

Citizen children must attend a school that provides instruction in Islam; noncitizen children may attend schools that do not offer instruction in Islam.

Citizens and noncitizen residents are free to discuss their religious beliefs; however, the Government prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims. Under Islamic law, a Muslim who recants belief in Islam would be considered an apostate and dealt with under applicable Islamic legal procedure. Non-Muslims are permitted to change their religious affiliation to Islam.

In June 2000, the departure from the country of a foreign Baha'i due to termination of his employment may have been hastened by the proselytizing activities of his wife. The authorities asked members of the Baha'i community not to proselytize, in accordance with the country's law and custom.

The Government prohibits non-Muslim groups from publishing religious material, although material printed abroad may be brought into the country. Members of all religions and religious groups are free to maintain links with coreligionists abroad and undertake foreign travel for religious purposes. Ministers and priests from abroad also are permitted to visit the country for the purpose of carrying out duties related to registered religious organizations.

The police monitor mosque sermons to ensure that the preachers do not discuss political topics and stay within the state-approved orthodoxy of Islam. The Government expects all imams to preach sermons within the parameters of standardized texts distributed monthly by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The Government has sponsored forums at which differing interpretations of Islam have been examined; there are no known instances during the period covered by this report where the Government has publicly promoted interfaith dialog.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities. Christian theologians have met with local Islamic authorities and with members of the faculty at the country's major university. Private groups that promote interfaith dialog are permitted to exist as long as discussions do not constitute an attempt to cause Muslims to recant their Islamic beliefs.

The Basic Charter provides that discrimination against individuals on the basis of religion or religious group is prohibited; however, decrees implementing the prohibition against religious discrimination have not yet been established.

Religious discrimination is largely absent; however, some members of the Shi'a minority claim that they face discrimination in employment and educational opportunities. Nonetheless, some Shi'a occupy prominent positions in both the private and public sectors.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Members of the staff at the U.S. Embassy routinely participate in local religious ceremonies, and have contact with non-Muslim practitioners.

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## QATAR

There is no constitutional protection for freedom of religion. The Official State religion follows the conservative Wahhabi tradition of the Hanbali school of Islam. The Government officially prohibits public worship by non-Muslims; however, it tolerates private worship for "peoples of the book," (i.e., Christians and Jews).

During the past year, the Government took substantive steps that somewhat improved respect for religious freedom by recognizing Christian clergy and proceeding with plans to construct Christian churches in the capital, Doha.

There are generally amicable relations among persons of differing religious beliefs. However, much of the population opposes the construction of Christian churches. Discrimination in some areas occurs, at times along religious lines. In general Muslims hold all positions of authority in the Government, with citizens holding higher level positions and foreign Muslims holding lower positions. Shi'a Muslims experience discrimination in employment in sensitive areas. Non-Muslims may not proselytize, and the Government formally prohibits the publication, importation, and distribution of Bibles and other non-Islamic religious literature. However, in practice individuals generally are not prevented from importing Bibles and other religious items for personal use.

The U.S. Ambassador and embassy staff meet regularly with government officials to discuss issues of religious freedom. Other embassy officers have taken the lead in bringing government officials and lay church leaders together to discuss the modalities of expanding toleration and understanding of non-Islamic worship. The Government has been receptive to quiet dialog and has offered to donate land for and assist in the construction of Christian churches.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

There is no constitutional protection for freedom of religion. The state religion is Islam, as interpreted by the conservative Wahhabi order of the Sunni branch. The Government officially prohibits public worship by non-Muslims; however, it tolerates and protects services conducted privately with prior notification to the authorities. The Government allows Shi'a Muslims to practice their faith freely; however, community leaders have agreed to refrain from certain public practices, such as self-flagellation.

The Government and ruling family are inextricably linked to the practice of Islam. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs controls the construction of mosques, the administration of clerical affairs, and instruction in the Koran. The Minister of Islamic Affairs is a member of the Emir's cabinet and participates in policymaking at the highest level. The only official government holidays aside from the independence day are the Eid Al-Fitr, following the holy month of Ramadan, and the Eid Al-Adha, which commemorates the end of the Hajj. The Emir participates in widely publicized "Eid prayers" and each year personally finances the Hajj pilgrimages of many who cannot afford to travel to Mecca.

During the period covered by this report, the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches in effect received de facto official recognition. However, formal recognition apparently has not yet been granted. There reportedly is a verbal commitment by the Government to allow the churches to operate openly in a manner that apparently reflects de facto government recognition.

*Religious Demography*

There are no reliable population figures available; however, the population is estimated to be about 650,000. Of that number, about 170,000 are believed to be citizens. It is estimated that the majority of the remaining 480,000 persons are Sunni Muslim foreigners, and that the rest are Shi'a Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Baha'is.

A large foreign population practices other faiths, albeit privately and quietly. Most foreigners are concentrated in and around the capital city of Doha. In addition to Muslim foreigners, there are a significant number of Christians (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and other Protestant denominations), as well as smaller numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, and Baha'is living and working in the country. The Christian community consists of a diverse mix of Americans, Europeans, Arabs, Indians, and Filipinos. The Hindu community is almost exclusively Indian. Buddhists are found among the East Asian community, and a small number of ethnic Persians make up the Baha'i community. The Shi'a community has a small number of mosques.

Police provide traffic control for authorized Catholic masses, which may be attended by 1,000 or more persons at Easter and Christmas. In December 1999, Christmas cards and decorations were readily available in several shops in the capital, even though the holiday coincided with the holy month of Ramadan. During March and April, Easter merchandise was widely available.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Non-Muslims may not proselytize, and conversion from Islam is theoretically a capital offense. However, there is no record of an execution for such a conversion since independence in 1971.

The Government formally prohibits the publication, importation, and distribution of Bibles and other non-Islamic religious literature. However, in practice individuals generally are not prevented from importing Bibles and other religious items for personal use. In previous years, there were sporadic reports of confiscation of such materials by customs officials. During the period covered by this report, some Christian worship groups reported having no trouble importing instructional materials (i.e., Sunday school materials and devotionals) for use by the groups.

There are no restrictions on non-Muslims providing religious instruction to their children; however, the public schools provide compulsory instruction in Islam. The public schools generally are closed to foreigners, most of whose children attend any of a number of private schools.

Practice of Islam confers advantage in civil life. For example, non-Muslims do not have the right to bring suit in the Shari'a (Islamic law) courts. These courts are utilized to settle the majority of civil claims; thus, non-Muslims are at a distinct disadvantage.

*Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

The overall trend during the period covered by this report has been toward somewhat more religious freedom for Christian worship. Private discussions between the

Government and the ambassadors of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Romania, and South Korea have yielded progress in the area of religious freedom. The Government apparently has recognized the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches on a de facto basis and allowed them to operate more openly. For example, priests of the three churches have been asked to wear their clerical garb and can apply to be sponsors for visitor visas for other church representatives. In addition, church representatives can import reasonable amounts of Bibles and other religious literature for use by their congregations. In February 2000, the Government identified a parcel of land on which it plans to allow the construction of three churches, one each for the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox communities. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture met with diplomats and representatives of the churches to discuss initial design plans.

Such progress for Christians is due, in large part, to their status as "people of the book;" the Koran accords special status to Christians and Jews. The Government intends neither to permit Hindus and Buddhists to worship openly nor to establish temples because it claims that there is no Koranic justification for tolerance of polytheistic religions.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There were no reports that the Government forcibly converted any individuals. However, a criminal may have his or her sentence reduced by memorizing the Koran. For non-Muslim prisoners, this may create an incentive to convert to Islam.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between persons of differing religious beliefs generally are amicable and tolerant. However, a sizable percentage of the citizen population opposes the construction of Christian churches.

Discrimination in the areas of employment, education, housing, and health services occurs, at times along religious lines. Non-Muslims hold jobs in the Government and military; however, they are generally technical positions. In general Muslims hold all positions of authority in the Government, with citizens holding higher level positions and foreign Muslims holding lower positions. Shi'a Muslims experience discrimination in employment in sensitive areas, such as security. However, the critical factor in most cases of discrimination is citizenship. Muslim and non-Muslim foreigners face the same challenges. Health care, electricity, water, and education are provided free-of-charge to citizens, while foreigners must pay for these services. Citizens also may receive low- or no-interest home loans from the Government. Foreigners must rent housing because they are not permitted to own property.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, and the Embassy's political officer meet regularly with government officials at many levels to address the issue of religious freedom, both in public and in private. The issue has been raised with the Emir, the Foreign Minister, and several other government officials. Efforts to emphasize religious freedom are also being coordinated with the Embassies of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Romania, and South Korea.

The Government has been receptive to the pleas from foreign governments to allow the construction of Christian churches, as evidenced by recent progress (see Section I). Its main concern is that the process should proceed slowly so as not to create undue opposition among more conservative elements of the population in the hope that, by taking the time to lay the groundwork, opposition will be minimal.

## SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic monarchy without constitutional protection for freedom of religion, and such protection does not exist in practice. Islam is the official religion, and all citizens must be Muslims. The Government prohibits the public practice of other religions. Private worship by non-Muslims, as defined by the Government, is recognized officially.

Through published interviews with government officials and press articles that addressed the subject in the context of human rights, non-Islamic freedom to worship privately received more attention and greater respect than in the previous year.

The overwhelming majority of citizens support an Islamic state and oppose public non-Muslim worship. There is a greater degree of tolerance of foreigners and non-Muslims in both the eastern and western provinces than in the isolated central Nejd region. There is institutionalized discrimination against adherents of the Shi'a branch of Islam.

The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, the U.S. Ambassador, and other U.S. government officials have raised the issue of religious freedom with the Government on numerous occasions during the period covered by this report.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Freedom of religion does not exist. Islam is the official religion and all citizens must be Muslims. The Government prohibits the public practice of other religions. Private worship by non-Muslims is permitted.

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic monarchy and the Government has declared the Islamic holy book, the Koran, and the Sunna (tradition) of the Prophet Muhammad, to be the country's Constitution. The Government bases its legitimacy on governance according to the precepts of the rigorously conservative and strict interpretation of the Hanbali school of the Sunni branch of Islam and discriminates against other branches of Islam. Neither the Government nor society in general accepts the concepts of separation of religion and state, and such separation does not exist.

Islamic practice generally is limited to that of the Wahabi order, which adheres to the Hanbali school of the Sunni branch of Islam as interpreted by Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahab, an 18th century Saudi religious reformer. Practices contrary to this interpretation, such as visits to the tombs of renowned Muslims, are discouraged. The practice of other schools of Sunni Islam is discouraged, and there is institutionalized discrimination against adherents of the Shi'a branch of Islam. The Government supervises almost all mosques in the country and funds their construction, maintenance, and operations.

##### *Religious Demography*

Sunni Muslims make up approximately 12.1 million of the country's nearly 14 million citizens.

Seven million foreigners reside in the country, including about 1.2 million Indians, 1.2 million Egyptians, nearly 800,000 Pakistanis, 600,000 Filipinos, 130,000 Sri Lankans, and 30,000 Americans. These foreigners include Muslims of different denominations, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and, presumably, non-believers and atheists.

Comprehensive statistics for the denominations of foreigners are not available. However, the Filipino Embassy reports that over 90 percent of the Filipino community (or over half a million persons) is non-Muslim, including Catholics and Protestants.

The Shi'a Muslim minority (roughly 900,000 persons) lives mostly in the eastern province, where Shi'a constitute about one-third of the population.

##### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Ministry of Islamic affairs directly supervises, and is a major source of funds for, the construction and maintenance of almost all mosques in the country. The Ministry pays the salaries of imams (prayer leaders) and others who work in the mosques. A governmental committee is responsible for defining the qualifications of imams. The Mutawwa'in (religious police, who make up the Committee to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice) are government employees, and the president of the Mutawwa'in holds the rank of cabinet minister. The spreading of Muslim teachings not in conformance with the officially accepted interpretation of Islam is prohibited. Writers and other individuals who publicly criticize this interpretation, including both those who advocate a stricter interpretation and those who favor a more moderate interpretation than the Government's, reportedly have been imprisoned and faced other reprisals.

During the period covered by this report, foreign imams were barred from leading worship during the most heavily attended prayer times and prohibited from delivering sermons during Friday congregational prayers. The Government claims that

its actions were part of its "Saudiization" plan to replace foreign workers with citizens.

Under Shari'a (Islamic law), upon which the Government bases its jurisprudence, conversion by a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy. Public apostasy is a crime punishable by death if the accused does not recant.

The Government prohibits public non-Muslim religious activities. Non-Muslim worshippers risk arrest, lashing, and deportation for engaging in overt religious activity that attracts official attention. During the period covered by this report, two group arrests were made after religious police raided large Christian congregations during services that were held on Friday, the Muslim day of rest.

Proselytizing by non-Muslims is illegal, including the distribution of non-Muslim religious materials such as Bibles. No foreign missionaries operate legally in the country. During the period covered by this report, two Filipino men were arrested, charged with proselytizing, and forced to serve approximately 2 months in prison.

Members of the Shi'a minority are the objects of officially sanctioned political and economic discrimination. Prior to 1990, the Government prohibited Shi'a public processions during the Islamic month of Muharram and restricted other processions and congregations to designated areas in the major Shi'a cities. Since 1990, the authorities have permitted the celebration of the Shi'a holiday of Ashura in the eastern province city of Qatif, provided that the celebrants do not undertake large, public marches or engage in self-flagellation (a traditional Shi'a practice). No other Ashura celebrations are permitted in the Kingdom, and many Shi'a travel to Qatif or to Bahrain to participate in Ashura celebrations.

The Government seldom permits private construction of Shi'a mosques. Shi'a have declined government offers to build state-supported mosques because the Government would prohibit the incorporation and display of Shi'a motifs in any such mosques.

The Government actively discourages Shi'a travel to Iran to visit pilgrimage sites, although Shi'a citizens are permitted to visit holy sites in Iraq.

Persons wearing religious symbols of any kind in public risk confrontation with the Mutawwa'in. This general prohibition against religious symbols also applies to Muslims. A Christian wearing a crucifix or a Muslim wearing a Koranic necklace in public might be admonished. A very strict conservative Islamic dress code requiring extreme modesty is enforced for Muslim and non-Muslim women alike. Particularly in the more conservative Nejd region, virtually all women wear an abaya (a long black cloak), and many wear a headscarf while in public. Failure to do so can lead to admonishment by Mutawwa'in, and in the past occasionally has led to arrest. Male modesty also is required. Males going shirtless or in short pants while in public also risk admonishment.

Islamic religious education is mandatory in public schools at all levels. All children receive religious instruction, which generally is limited to that of the Hanbali school of Islam.

In accordance with Shari'a, Saudi women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims, but Saudi men may marry Christians and Jews, as well as Muslims.

The Government requires noncitizens to carry Iqamas, or legal resident identity cards, which contain a religious designation for "Muslim" or "non-Muslim."

#### *Governmental Abuses of Freedom of Religion*

A Filipino man was arrested in June 1999 and another Filipino man was arrested in July 1999. Both men were charged with proselytizing, served approximately 2 months in prison, and subsequently were deported.

There were two group arrests of Filipino Christians made during the period covered by the report, one of 13 persons in October 1999 and another of 16 persons in January 2000. Both arrests occurred after religious police raided large Christian congregations during services held on Friday, the local day of rest. In both instances, government officials maintained that the religious services were attended by such a large number of persons that they could not be considered private. Some of those arrested were charged with illegal assembly and all detainees subsequently were deported to the Philippines.

There were reports that the authorities arrested a Christian man in June 2000 for possession of a videotape of a religious event. There were no formal charges brought against him and he remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports that government security forces arrested or detained Shi'a on the suspicion of subversion and pro-Iranian activities, as had been reported in the past.

In April 2000, in the city of Najran, in the southwest region bordering Yemen, riots took place in which members of the Makrama Ismaili Shi'a community report-



edly engaged in gun battles with security forces. Some press reports indicated that the rioting followed the arrest of a Makarama Ismaili Shi'a imam and some of his followers on charges of "sorcery." Various other reports attributed the unrest to the closure of two Ismaili Shi'a mosques and the provincial governor's refusal to permit Ismailis to hold public observances of the Shi'a holiday of Ashura. Still other reports attributed the unrest to a local crackdown on smuggling and resultant tribal discontent. Officials at the highest level of the Government stated that the unrest in Najran was not the result of Shi'a-Sunni tension or religious discrimination. After the unrest ended the Government stated that 5 members of the security forces were killed and Ismaili leaders claimed that as many as 40 Ismaili tribesmen were killed. There was no independent confirmation of these claims.

Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, some Shi'a suspected of subversion have been subjected periodically to surveillance and limitations on travel abroad. Since beginning the investigation of the 1996 bombing of the U.S. military installation at AlKhobar, in which a number of eastern-province Shi'a were arrested, authorities have detained, interrogated, and confiscated the passports of a number of Shi'a Muslims. Shi'a who travel to Iran without government permission, or who are suspected of such travel, normally have their passports confiscated upon their return to Saudi Arabia for periods of up to 2 years.

As of June 30, 2000, the Government reportedly still held in jail an unknown number of Shi'a who were arrested in the aftermath of the Al-Khobar bombing.

Magic is widely believed in and sometimes practiced, often in the form of fortune-telling and swindles. However, under Shari'a the practice of magic is regarded as the worst form of polytheism, an offense for which no repentance is accepted, and which is punishable by death. There are an unknown number of detainees held in prison on the charge of "sorcery," or the practice of "black magic" or "witchcraft." In a few cases, self-proclaimed "miracle workers" have been executed for sorcery involving physical harm or apostasy. In 1999 the Al-Bilad newspaper reported that the Interior Ministry ordered the execution of a Sudanese man convicted of practicing magic in Jeddah for 3.5 years. The man claimed to be an herbal medicine expert and had treated a number of women with tonics and potions; he reportedly possessed 16 spell books and related paraphernalia. The man reportedly confessed to conspiring with Jinns (beings made of fire who coexist with humans) in "efforts to separate wives from their husbands."

Mutawwa'in practices and incidents of abuse varied widely in different regions of the country, but were most numerous in the central Nejd region, which includes the capital Riyadh. In certain areas, both the Mutawwa'in and religious vigilantes acting on their own harassed, assaulted, battered, arrested, and detained citizens and foreigners. The Government requires the Mutawwa'in to follow established procedures and to offer instruction in a polite manner; however, Mutawwa'in did not always comply with the requirements. The Government has not criticized abuses by Mutawwa'in and religious vigilantes publicly but has sought to curtail these abuses.

Mutawwa'n enforcement of strict standards of social behavior included closing commercial establishments during the five daily prayer observances, insisting upon compliance with strict norms of public dress, and dispersing gatherings in public places. Mutawwa'in frequently reproached Saudi and foreign women for failure to observe strict dress codes, and arrested men and women found together who were not married or closely related.

The Mutawwa'in have the authority to detain persons for no more than 24 hours for violation of strict standards of proper dress and behavior. However, they sometimes exceeded this limit before delivering detainees to the police. Current procedures require a police officer to accompany the Mutawwa'in at the time of an arrest. Mutawwa'in generally complied with this requirement. During 1999 and through mid-2000, in the more conservative Riyadh district, the frequency of reports of Mutawwa'in accosting, abusing, arresting, and detaining persons alleged to have violated dress and behavior standards was about the same as in 1998. The Jeddah district also received a similar number of reports as in 1998.

In November 1998, several Mutawwa'in attacked and killed an elderly Shi'a prayer leader in Hofuf for repeating the call to prayer twice (a traditional Shi'a practice). Mutawwa'in attempts to cover up the killing were unsuccessful. The Government reportedly was investigating the incident, but there has been no further information on the case.

Criticism of the Mutawwa'in has appeared in the largely government-controlled press. Also, according to reports, the Mutawwa'in are no longer permitted to detain citizens for more than a few hours, may not conduct investigations, and may no longer allow unpaid volunteers to accompany official patrols.

Customs officials routinely open mail and shipments to search for contraband, including material that is deemed pornographic, and non-Muslim religious material.

Customs officials confiscated or censored materials considered offensive, including Bibles and religious videotapes.

*Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

Through published interviews with government officials and press articles that addressed the subject in the context of human rights, non-Islamic freedom to worship privately received more attention and greater respect than in the previous year.

Senior officials in the Government publicly reaffirmed the right of non-Muslims to engage in private religious worship. In an address to the 56th session of the U.N. Committee on Human Rights in April 2000, Prince Turki bin Muhammad bin Saud AlKabir, King Fahd's son-in-law and the Director of the International Organizations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that "non-Muslims enjoy full freedom to engage in their religious observances in private." The media widely disseminated Prince Turki's speech and the media increasingly acknowledges the right to private non-Muslim worship. Such private non-Muslim worship occurs on a wide scale throughout the country, including on the premises of several foreign embassies.

Other high-level Saudi officials repeatedly confirmed during the period covered by this report that the Government's policy allows for private non-Muslim worship and that the Government does not sanction investigation or harassment of such private worship services. These officials ascribed any residual harassment of private worship services or seizure of personal religious materials such as Bibles or icons to individuals and organizations acting on their own authority and in contradiction of government policy. Representatives of Christian denominations present in the country report that the Government is not interfering with private worship services as long as those services remain discreet.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

Under Saudi law, children of Saudi fathers are considered Muslim, regardless of the country or the religious tradition in which they may have been raised. In some cases, children raised in other countries and in other religious traditions who came to Saudi Arabia or who were taken by their Saudi fathers to Saudi Arabia reportedly were coerced to conform to Islamic norms and practices. There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States during the period covered by this report or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. However, there was a report that prior to the period covered by this report, at least one U.S. citizen child in Saudi Arabia was subjected to pressure—and at times force—by her Saudi relatives to renounce Christianity and conform to Islamic norms and practices.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Members of the Shi'a minority constitute nearly 8 percent of the citizenry and are discriminated against in government employment, especially with respect to positions that relate to national security, such as the military or the Ministry of the Interior. The Government also restricts employment of Shi'a in the oil industry. Shi'a are the objects of government discrimination in higher education in the form of unofficial restrictions on the number of Shi'a admitted to universities.

Improved relations between Iran (a predominately Shi'a nation) and Saudi Arabia (a majority Sunni nation) during the period covered by this report have affected positively the overall climate of Sunni-Shi'a relations in general.

Relations between Saudi Muslims and foreign Muslims are generally good. Foreign Muslims of all denominations pray freely in mosques as long as they follow Saudi Sunni prayer practices, although foreign imams have a more difficult time obtaining employment in mosques. All sermons are monitored. There are no separate mosques for foreigners.

Relations between Saudis and non-Muslim foreigners reflect the general relationship between 14 million Saudi citizens and 7 million foreigners residing in the Kingdom. Saudis from the historically isolated central Nejd region have had less exposure to foreigners and tend to be more reserved and insular. There is a greater degree of tolerance toward foreigners in both the eastern and western provinces, where trade and pilgrimage have exposed citizens living in coastal areas to foreigners and their customs for many centuries.

Non-Muslims who undertook religious observances privately and discreetly were not disturbed during the period covered by this report. However, several problems resulted after Saudi citizens complained to the authorities about services being held on rooftops, in full view and within hearing range of Muslims living nearby.

In certain areas, religious vigilantes acting on their own harassed, assaulted, battered, arrested, and detained citizens and foreigners.

The overwhelming majority of citizens support an Islamic state and oppose public non-Muslim worship. Citizens often ask foreigners about religious matters to determine a person's religion, attitudes, and knowledge of Islam. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, about 50 so-called "Call and Guidance" centers employing about 500 persons work to convert foreigners to Islam. Some non-Muslim foreigners convert to Islam during their stay in the country, including more than 200 persons in Jeddah each year. The press often carries articles about such conversions, including personal testimonials.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Ambassador, the U.S. Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission, the U.S. Consuls General in Jeddah and Dhahran, the Embassy's Political Counselor, and other political officers have raised the issue of religious freedom on numerous occasions during the period covered by this report. The Embassy's human rights officer met several times with Filipino Christian group members and Philippine embassy staff during the period of detention and deportation of persons suspected of involvement with Christian proselytizing groups.

Several meetings were held during the period covered by this report in which the issue of religious freedom was raised. The Embassy's Political Counselor delivered a demarche on religious freedom to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs official in charge of human rights. The Assistant Deputy Foreign Minister met with David Welch, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, the Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission, and the Political Counselor regarding religious freedom and human rights issues. Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal met with Welch and the Political Counselor regarding religious freedom and human rights issues. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs official in charge of human rights, including freedom of religion, met with the Embassy's political human rights officer.

## SYRIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it imposes restrictions in some areas.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the generally free practice of religion. However, there are periodic reports of friction between religious faiths. The Government monitors the activities of all groups, including religious groups, discourages aggressive proselytizing, and has banned the Jehovah's Witnesses as a politically-motivated Zionist organization.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it imposes restrictions in some areas. The only advantage given to a particular religion by the Constitution is the requirement that the President be a Muslim. There is no state religion, although the majority of the population is Sunni Muslim.

All religions and orders must register with the Government, which monitors fund raising and requires permits for all meetings by religious (and non-religious) groups, except for worship. Recognized religious groups receive free utilities and are exempt from real estate taxes and personal property taxes on official vehicles. There is a strict de facto separation of church and state. Religious groups tend to avoid any involvement in internal political affairs. The Government, in turn, generally refrains from becoming involved in strictly religious issues. However, the Government banned Jehovah's Witnesses as a politically-motivated Zionist organization in 1964.

#### *Religious Demography*

While there is no official state religion, Sunni Muslims represent about 74 percent of the population. Other orders, including Druze, Alawi, Ismailis, Shi'a, and Yazidis, constitute an estimated 16 percent of the population. A variety of Christian denomi-

nations make up the remaining 10 percent of the population. The great majority of Christians belong to the Eastern groups that have existed in the country since the earliest days of Christianity. The main Eastern groups belong to autonomous Orthodox churches, the Uniate churches which recognize the Roman Catholic Pope, and the independent Nestorian Church. There also are believed to be less than 100 Jews and a small number of Yazidis.

The largest Christian denomination is the Greek Orthodox Church, known in Syria as the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. The Syrian Orthodox Church is notable for its use of a Syriac liturgy. Most Syrians of Armenian origin belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which uses an Armenian liturgy. The largest Uniate church in the country is the Greek Catholic Church. Other Uniate denominations include the Maronite Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, and the Chaldean Catholic Church, which derives from the Nestorian Church. The Government also permits the presence, both officially and unofficially, of other Christian denominations, including Baptist, Mennonite, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon).

Sunni Muslims are found throughout the country. Christians tend to be urbanized and most live in Damascus and Aleppo, although significant numbers live in the Hasaka governorate in the northeast. A majority of the Alawis live in the Latakia governorate. A significant majority of the Druze population resides in the rugged Jabal Al-Arab region in the southeast. The few remaining Jews are concentrated in Damascus and Aleppo. Yazidis are found primarily in the northeast.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government considers militant Islam a threat to the regime and follows closely the practice of its adherents. The Government has allowed many mosques to be built; however, sermons are monitored and controlled and mosques are closed between prayers.

Although the law does not prohibit proselytizing, the Government discourages such activity in practice, particularly when such activity is deemed a threat to the generally good relations among religious groups (see Section II). Foreign missionary groups are present but operate discreetly.

Officially, all schools are government run and nonsectarian, although some schools are run in practice by Christian and Jewish minorities. There is mandatory religious instruction in schools, with government-approved teachers and curricula. Religion courses are divided into separate classes for Muslim and Christian students. Jews have a separate primary school, which offers religious instruction on Judaism, in addition to traditional subjects. Although Arabic is the official language in public schools, the Government permits the teaching of Armenian, Hebrew, Syriac (Aramaic) and Chaldean in some schools on the basis that these are "liturgical languages."

Religious groups are subject to their respective religious laws on marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.

The Government generally avoids intervention in religious affairs, including direct support for programs promoting interfaith understanding. Nevertheless, government policies tend to support the study and practice of moderate forms of Islam.

Government policy officially disavows sectarianism of any kind. However, in the case of Alawis, religion can be a contributing factor in determining career opportunities. For example, members of the President's Alawi sect hold a predominant position in the security services and military, well out of proportion to their percentage of the population, which is estimated to be 12 percent.

For primarily political rather than religious reasons, Jews generally are barred from government employment and do not have military service obligations. Jews also are the only religious minority group whose passports and identity cards note their religion.

The security services constantly are alert to any possible political threat to the State and all groups, religious and non-religious, are subject to surveillance and monitoring by government security services.

Although Jehovah's Witnesses have continued to practice their faith privately despite the official ban, the Government arrested several members of Jehovah's Witnesses as they gathered for religious meetings in 1997.

There were credible reports of large-scale arrests of Syrian and Palestinian Islamists affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Liberation Party in late 1999 and early 2000. Some of the Islamist prisoners reportedly were tortured in detention. A number of Islamist prisoners also were reportedly released during the period covered by this report, but some remain in custody. These arrests were motivated primarily by political reasons as the Government continues to view militant Islamists as potential threats to the stability of the regime.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor United States citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities generally are amicable, and there is little evidence of societal discrimination or violence against religious minorities. However, there are periodic reports of friction between religious faiths, which may be related to deteriorating economic conditions and internal political issues. To date, these reports appear isolated.

Although no law prohibits religious denominations from proselytizing, the Government is sensitive to complaints by religious groups of aggressive proselytizing by other groups and has intervened when such activities threatened the relations among religions. Societal conventions make conversions relatively rare, especially in the case of Muslim-to-Christian conversions. In many cases, societal pressure forces those who undertake such conversions to relocate within the country or to depart Syria in order to practice their new religion openly.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials meet routinely with religious leaders and adherents of almost all denominations at the national, regional, and local levels. Embassy officials remain sensitive to any change in the degree of religious freedom in the country.

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# TUNISIA

Islam is the state religion. The Constitution provides for the free exercise of other religions that do not disturb the public order, and the Government generally observes and enforces this right; however, it does not permit proselytizing and partially limits the religious freedom of Baha'is.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Amicable relations exist among all religious communities. The Government prohibits proselytizing as an act against the public order for which foreign missionaries may be expelled.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Islam is the state religion. The Constitution provides for the free exercise of other religions that do not disturb the public order, and the Government generally observes and enforces this right; however, it does not permit proselytizing and partially limits the religious freedom of Baha'is.

The Government recognizes all Christian and Jewish religious organizations that were established before independence in 1956. Although the Government permits Christian churches to operate freely, only the Catholic Church has formal recognition from the postindependence Government. The other churches operate under land grants signed by the Bey of Tunis in the 18th and 19th centuries, which are respected by the postindependence Government.

### *Religious Demography*

The vast majority of the population of 9.2 million is nominally Muslim. There is no reliable data on the number of practicing Muslims. There is a small indigenous Sufi community but no statistics regarding its size. Reliable sources report that many Sufis left the country shortly after independence when their religious buildings and land reverted to the Government (as did those of Orthodox Islamic foundations), leaving them no place to worship. Although the Sufi community is small, the its tradition of mysticism permeates the practice of Islam throughout the country.

During annual Ramadan festivals, Sufis provide public cultural entertainment with whirling dervish dances.

The nominal Christian community—composed of foreign temporary and permanent residents and a small group of native-born citizens of both European and Arab origin—numbers approximately 20,000 and is dispersed throughout the country. According to church leaders, the practicing Christian population numbers approximately 2,000 and includes an estimated 200 native-born ethnic Arab citizens who have converted to Christianity. The Catholic Church operates 5 churches, 14 private schools, and 7 cultural centers throughout the country, as well as 1 hospital in Tunis, the capital. It has approximately 1,400 practicing members, composed of temporary and permanent foreign residents and a small number of native-born citizens of European and Arab origin. In addition to holding religious services, the Catholic Church also freely organizes cultural activities and performs charitable work throughout the country. The Russian Orthodox Church has 100 practicing members and operates two churches—one in Tunis and one in Bizerte. The French Reform Church operates one church in Tunis, with a congregation of 140 primarily foreign members. The Anglican Church has approximately 50 foreign members who worship in a church in Tunis. The 30-member Greek Orthodox Church maintains one church each in Tunis, Sousse, and Jerba. A community of 43 Jehovah's Witnesses, of which about half are foreign residents and half are native-born citizens, also exists.

With 1,800 adherents split nearly equally between the capital and the island of Jerba, the Jewish community is the country's largest indigenous religious minority. There are also 150 members of the Baha'i Faith.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Freedom of Religion*

The Government controls and subsidizes mosques and pays the salaries of prayer leaders. The President appoints the Grand Mufti of the Republic. The 1988 Law on Mosques provides that only personnel appointed by the Government may lead activities in mosques, and stipulates that mosques must remain closed except during prayer times and other authorized religious ceremonies, such as marriages or funerals. New mosques may be built in accordance with national urban planning regulations but become the property of the State. The Constitution stipulates that the President of the Republic must be a Muslim. The Government also partially subsidizes the Jewish community.

The Government allows the Jewish community freedom of worship and pays the salary of the Grand Rabbi. It also partially subsidizes restoration and maintenance costs for some synagogues. In October 1999, the provisional Jewish community elected a new board of directors, its first since independence in 1956, which is awaiting approval from the governor of Tunis. Once approval is obtained from the governor, which is expected to be only a formality, the committee is expected to receive permanent status. The acting board has changed its name to the Jewish Committee of Tunisia. The Government permits the Jewish community to operate private religious schools and allows Jewish children on the island of Jerba to split their academic day between secular public schools and private religious schools. The Government also encourages Jewish emigres to return for the annual Jewish pilgrimage to the historic El-Ghriba Synagogue on the island of Jerba.

The Government regards the Baha'i Faith as a heretical sect of Islam and permits its adherents to practice their faith only in private. Although the Government permits Baha'is to hold meetings of their National Council in private homes, it reportedly has prohibited them from organizing local councils. The Government reportedly pressures Baha'is to eschew organized religious activities. The Government also does not permit Baha'is to accept a declaration of faith from persons who wish to convert to the Baha'i Faith. There were credible reports that four members of the Baha'i Faith were interrogated by Ministry of Interior officials in 1999 and pressed to sign a statement that they would not practice their religion and would not hold meetings in their homes.

In general the Government does not permit Christian groups to establish new churches, and proselytizing is viewed as an act against the public order. Foreign missionary organizations and groups do not operate in the country. Authorities ask foreigners suspected of proselytizing to depart the country and do not permit them to return. There were no reported cases of official action against persons suspected of proselytizing during the period covered by this report.

Islamic religious education is mandatory in public schools, but the religious curriculum for secondary school students also includes the history of Judaism and Christianity. The Zeitouna Koranic School is part of the Government's national university system.

Both religious and secular nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) are governed by the same law and administrative regulations on association that impose some re-

strictions on freedom of assembly. For example, all NGO's are required to notify the Government of meetings to be held in public spaces at least 3 days in advance and to submit lists of all meeting participants to the Ministry of Interior. There were credible reports that two Christian religious organizations did not attempt to register because they believed that their applications would be rejected, although they were able to function freely under the auspices of their respective churches. Neither group believed that it was a victim of religious discrimination. A third group, composed of foreign Christians mostly from Sweden and the United Kingdom, is active in providing medical and social services in the city of Kasserine in the west. Despite its ambiguous legal status, this group (with 15 to 20 members) reports that it has been free to pursue its social and medical work without interference and states that it does not believe that it has been subject to religious discrimination.

Religious groups are subjected to the same restrictions on freedom of speech and the press as secular groups. Primary among these restrictions is "depot legal," the requirement that printers and publishers provide copies of all publications to the Chief Prosecutor, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Culture prior to publication. Similarly, distributors must deposit copies of publications printed abroad with the Chief Prosecutor and various ministries prior to their public release. Although Christian groups reported that they were able to distribute previously-approved religious publications in European languages without difficulty, they claimed that the Government generally did not approve either publication or distribution of Arabic-language Christian material. Moreover, authorized distribution of religious publications was limited to existing religious communities, because the Government views public distribution of both religious and secular documents as a threat to the public order and hence an illegal act.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding by sponsoring regular conferences and seminars on religious tolerance and by facilitating and promoting the annual Jewish pilgrimage to the El-Ghriba Synagogue.

There was a credible report of a Muslim couple in Bizerte who had converted to Christianity and were not permitted to renew their passports as a result of their conversion. Muslim women are not permitted to marry outside their religion. Marriages of Muslim women to non-Muslim men abroad are considered common-law, which are prohibited and thus void when the couple returns to Tunisia. Non-Muslim women who marry Muslim men are not permitted to inherit from their husbands, nor may the husbands and any children (who are considered to be Muslim) from the marriage inherit from the non-Muslim wife.

Although civil law is codified, judges are known to override codified law with Shari'a (Islamic law) if codified law contradicts it. For example, codified laws provide women with the legal right to have custody over minor children; however, judges have refused to grant women permission to leave the country with minor children, holding that Shari'a appoints the father as the head of the family who must grant children permission to travel. In 1999 one human rights activist reported that Ministry of Interior officials refused to issue her minor son a passport because the child's father, who was then jailed, was not present to give permission.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Freedom of Religion*

During the period covered by this report, credible sources estimate as many as 1,000 persons were serving prison sentences because of their membership in the illegal Islamist group AnNadha or for their alleged Islamist sympathies; however, there were no reports of cases in which it was clear that persons were arrested or detained based solely on their religious beliefs.

According to human rights lawyers, the Government regularly questioned Muslims who were observed praying frequently in mosques.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who have been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist among all religious communities.

There were no incidents of religiously motivated violence. However, there is great societal pressure for Muslims not to convert to other religions, and conversion from Islam is relatively rare. Muslims who do convert may face social ostracism for converting. There is some conversion among individuals in the Christian and Jewish communities.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains good relations with leaders of majority and minority religious groups throughout the country, and the Ambassador and other embassy officials met regularly with Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Baha'i religious leaders throughout the period covered by this report.

Embassy officials discussed religious freedom issues with government officials on various occasions during the year. In November 1999, the Ambassador hosted a meeting of a crosssection of Islamic scholars, religious leaders, and lay persons to discuss Islam in Tunisia. An Embassy political officer attended the May 22–23, 2000 Jewish El Ghriba pilgrimage in Jerba in commemoration of the Jewish festival of Lag B'Omer.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The federal Constitution designates Islam as the official religion, and Islam is also the official religion of all seven of the constituent emirates of the federal union. The federal Constitution also provides for the freedom to exercise religious worship in accordance with established customs provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals, and the Government generally respects this right in practice and does not interfere with the private practice of religion; however, it limits the number of officially recognized religions, controls virtually all Sunni mosques, grants only a small number of Christian denominations recognition, prohibits proselytizing, and restricts the ability of nonrecognized religions to conduct business as organized groups.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to a relatively tolerant atmosphere for the practice of a wide variety of faiths, albeit within the context of a predominantly Muslim society in which Islam has a privileged status, and not all non-Islamic religions have equal legal standing.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The federal Constitution designates Islam as the official religion, and Islam is also the official religion of all seven of the individual emirates in the federal union. The federal Constitution also provides for the freedom to exercise religious worship in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government controls virtually all Sunni mosques. The Government funds or subsidizes virtually all Sunni mosques and employs all Sunni imams. The Government also distributes guidance on religious sermons and monitors for political content sermons delivered in all mosques, whether Sunni or Shi'a. The Government does not appoint the imams in the country's Shi'a mosques. The Government prohibits proselytizing by non-Muslims.

The Government does not recognize all non-Muslim religions. In those emirates that officially recognize and thereby grant a legal identity to non-Muslim religious groups, only a limited number of Christian groups are granted this recognition. While recognizing the difference between Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity, the authorities make no legal distinction between Christian groups, particularly Protestants. Several often unrelated Christian congregations are required to share common facilities because of official limitations on the number of Christian denominations that are recognized officially. Non-Muslim and non-Christian religions have no legal identity in any of the emirates. Partly as a result of emirate policies regarding recognition of non-Muslim denominations, facilities for Christian congregations are far greater in number and size than those for non-Christian and non-Muslim groups, despite the fact that Christians are a small minority of non-Muslim foreigners.

*Religious Demography*

All of the country's citizens are Muslims, with approximately 85 percent followers of Sunni Islam and the remaining 15 percent followers of Shi'a Islam. Naturalization of new citizens is limited to Sunni Muslims. Approximately 80 percent of the



population are foreigners, predominantly South and Southeast Asian. A substantial number of foreign professionals are citizens of countries in the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Although no official figures are available, local observers estimate that approximately 55 percent of the foreign population are Muslim, 25 percent are Hindu, 10 percent are Christian, 5 percent are Buddhist, and 5 percent are a mixture of other faiths, including Ismailis, Parsis, Baha'is, and Sikhs (most of whom reside in the Dubai and Abu Dhabi).

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Virtually all Sunni mosques are government funded or subsidized; about 5 percent of Sunni mosques are entirely private, and several large mosques have large private endowments. The Shi'a minority, which is concentrated in the northern emirates, is free to worship and maintain its own mosques. All Shi'a mosques are considered private and receive no funds from the Government. The Government does not appoint sheikhs for Shi'a mosques. The Federal Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs distributes weekly guidance to both Sunni and Shi'a sheikhs regarding religious sermons and ensures that clergy do not deviate frequently or significantly from approved topics in their sermons. All Sunni imams are employees of either the federal Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs or individual emirate ministries. In 1993 the Emirate of Dubai placed private mosques under the control of its Department of Islamic Affairs and Endowments. This change gave the Government control over the appointment of preachers and the conduct of their work.

Major cities have Christian churches, some built on land donated by the ruling families of the emirates in which they are located. In Sharjah a new Catholic church was opened in 1997 and a new Armenian Orthodox church in 1998, both with public ceremonies. The Government of Dubai Emirate donated a parcel of land in Jebel Ali in 1998 for the construction of a facility to be shared by four Protestant congregations and a Catholic congregation. Also in 1998, land was designated in Jebel Ali for the construction of a second Christian cemetery, and Abu Dhabi Emirate donated land for the expansion of existing Christian burial facilities. In 1999 land was designated in Ras Al-Khaymah Emirate for the construction of a new Catholic church.

Dubai permits one Hindu temple and two Sikh temples to operate. There are no such temples elsewhere in the country. There are no Buddhist temples; however, Buddhists, along with Hindus and Sikhs in cities without temples, conduct religious ceremonies in private homes without interference. In 1998 Abu Dhabi Emirate donated land for the establishment of the country's first Baha'i cemetery. There are only two operating cremation facilities and associated cemeteries for the large Hindu community, one in Dubai and one in Sharjah. Official permission must be obtained for their use in every instance, posing a hardship for the large Hindu community, and neither accepts Hindus who have died in other parts of the country for cremation or burial. The remains of Hindus who die outside Dubai and Sharjah in all cases must be repatriated to their home country at considerable expense.

Non-Muslims in the country are free to practice their religion but may not proselytize publicly or distribute religious literature. The Government follows a policy of tolerance towards non-Muslim religions and, in practice, interferes very little in the religious activities of non-Muslims. Apparent differences in the treatment of Muslim and non-Muslim groups often have their origin in the dichotomy between citizens and noncitizens rather than religious difference.

The Government permits foreign clergy to minister to foreign populations, and non-Muslim religious groups are permitted to engage in private charitable activities and to send their children to private schools. Apart from donated land for the construction of churches and other religious facilities, including cemeteries, non-Muslim groups are not supported financially or subsidized by the Government. However, they are permitted to raise money from among their congregants and to receive financial support from abroad. Christian churches are permitted to openly advertise certain church functions, such as memorial services, in the press.

The conversion of Muslims to other religions is regarded with extreme antipathy. While there is no law against missionary activities, authorities have threatened to revoke the residence permits of persons suspected of such activities, and customs authorities have questioned the entry of large quantities of religious materials (Bibles, hymnals, etc.) that they deemed in excess of the normal requirements of existing congregations, although in most instances the questions have been resolved and the items have been admitted.

There have been reports that customs authorities are less likely to question the importation of Christian religious items than non-Muslim, non-Christian religious items, although in virtually all instances importation of the material in question eventually has been permitted.

Although emirate immigration authorities routinely ask foreigners to declare their religious affiliation, the Government does not collect or analyze this information, and religious affiliation is not a factor in the issuance or renewal of visas or residence permits.

In November 1999, the Government sponsored the country's first ecumenical meeting, officially designated a seminar on "Islam and the West," in Abu Dhabi, in honor of the visit to the country of the United Kingdom's Prince Charles. The half-day seminar included statements by Islamic and Christian clerics and a brief discussion. In addition, the principal advisor to the ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi on relations with Christian denominations regularly represents the country at ecumenical conferences and events in other countries. In 1999 Dubai emirate established a center for the promotion of cultural understanding aimed at expanding contact and interchange between the citizen and foreign populations. One of the center's goals is to expose foreigners to aspects of the indigenous culture, including Islam.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While citizens regard the United Arab Emirates as a Muslim country that should respect Muslim religious sensibilities on matters such as public consumption of alcohol, proper dress, and proper public comportment, society also places a high value on respect for privacy and on Islamic traditions of tolerance, particularly with respect to forms of Christianity. Casual attire for men and women is tolerated in areas and facilities frequented by foreigners, while hotels, stores, and other businesses patronized by both citizens and foreigners are permitted to sell alcohol and pork to non-Muslims, and to acknowledge, in modest displays, non-Muslim holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and Diwali (although such displays are not permitted during the month of Ramadan). Citizens occasionally express concern regarding the influence on society of the cultures of the country's foreign majority. However, in general citizens are familiar with foreign societies and believe that they can best limit unwanted foreign influence by supporting and strengthening indigenous cultural traditions. Slightly less tolerant attitudes by citizens toward non-Muslim and non-Christian faiths reflect both traditional Islamic views of these religions and the fact that Hindus and Buddhists in the country are overwhelmingly less-educated, less-affluent, and work in undesirable occupations.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U. S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

In early 1998, the U.S. Ambassador sent a letter to the Government of Dubai emirate in support of the request of three Protestant congregations for expanded facilities in Dubai, and later raised the issue in official meetings with Dubai emirate leaders. In response to these requests—and with the support of the U.S. and UK Embassies—Dubai emirate donated land for these facilities and granted permission for their construction. While originally three churches were envisioned, the Dubai municipality has instructed that the number of churches to be built on the site increase from 3 to 7. Financing of the construction projects is reportedly nearing completion, with construction expected to begin in fall 2000. The Ambassador and other embassy personnel also have participated regularly in ceremonies marking the opening or expansion of religious facilities, and embassy officers meet on occasion with Muslims, Christians, and representatives of other religious faiths.

## YEMEN

The Constitution declares that Islam is the state religion and also provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Followers of other religions are free to worship according to their beliefs; however, the Government forbids conversions and prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing. The Constitution states that Shari'a (Islamic law) is the source of all legislation.

There was no change in the status of respect of religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are very small numbers of religious minorities, and relations among religious groups generally are amicable.

The U. S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution declares that Islam is the state religion and also provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Followers of other religions are free to worship according to their beliefs and to wear religiously distinctive ornaments or dress; however, the Government forbids conversions, requires permission for the construction of new places of worship, and prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing. The Constitution states that Shari'a is the source of all legislation.

##### *Religious Demography*

Virtually all citizens are Muslims, either of the Zaydi order of Shi'a Islam or the Shafa'i order of Sunni Islam, representing approximately 35 percent and 65 percent of the total population, respectively. There are also a few thousand Ismailis, mostly in the north.

Almost all Christians are temporary foreign residents, except for a few families living in Aden that trace their origins to India. There are a few Hindus in Aden who also trace their origins to India. There are several churches and Hindu places of worship in Aden, but no non-Muslim public places of worship exist in the former North Yemen, largely because northern Yemen does not have a history of a large, resident foreign community as in the south. However, Christian church services are held regularly without harassment in private homes or facilities such as schools, and these facilities appear adequate to accommodate the small numbers involved.

Christian missionaries operate in Yemen and most are dedicated to the provision of medical services; others are employed in teaching and social services. Invited by the Government, the Sisters of Charity run homes for the poor and disabled in Sana'a, Taiz, Hodeida, and Aden. The Government has asked the Vatican to open additional Sisters of Charity facilities. The Government issues residence visas to priests so that they may provide for the community's religious needs. There is also a German Christian charitable mission in Hodeida and a Dutch Christian medical mission in Saada. An American Baptist congregation has run a hospital in Jibla for over 30 years. The Anglican Church also runs a charitable clinic. An American non-governmental organization (NGO), run by the Seventh-Day Adventists, works in the governorate of Hodeida.

Nearly all of the country's once sizable Jewish population has emigrated. There are no legal restrictions on the few hundred Jews who remain, although there are traditional restrictions on places of residence and choice of employment (see Section II). Approximately 500 Jews are scattered in a handful of villages between Sana'a and Saada in northern Yemen.

##### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Under Islam the conversion of a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy, a crime punishable by death. There were no reports of cases in which the crime has been charged or prosecuted by government authorities. In January 2000, the director of the Aden office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) received a report that a Somali refugee, who allegedly had converted from Islam to Christianity after his arrival in Yemen, had been arrested for apostasy. The UNHCR's investigation found that the refugee had been detained previously by police in Aden and at the UNHCR's Al-Jahin camp. The refugee is registered with the UNHCR under a Christian name but maintains an address in Sana'a under a Muslim name. He is married to a Muslim woman and has an Islamic marriage certificate. The UNHCR believed that authorities detained the refugee on criminal rather than religious grounds. At the end of the period covered by this report, the refugee was out of police custody and living in Aden while the UNHCR explored resettlement possibilities.

There are unconfirmed reports that some police, without the authorization or knowledge of their superiors, on occasion have harassed and detained persons suspected of apostasy in order to compel them to renounce their conversions.

The Government does not allow the building of new non-Muslim public places of worship without permission; however, in 1998 the country established diplomatic re-

lations with the Vatican and agreed to the construction and operation of a "Christian center" in Sana'a. The Papal Nuncio, resident in Kuwait, presented his credentials to the Yemeni Government in March 2000. Yemen's ambassador to Italy was accredited to the Vatican in July 1999. President Ali Abdullah Saleh paid an official visit to the Vatican at the time of his state visit to Italy in April.

Public schools provide instruction in Islam but not in other religions. However, almost all non-Muslims are foreigners who attend private schools.

In February the Government revised its travel regulations to allow Yemeni-origin Jews on third-country passports to travel to Yemen, as well as Yemeni-origin Israelis with laissez-passer travel documents. The first such visitors arrived in March.

Private Islamic organizations may maintain ties to pan-Islamic organizations and operate schools, but the Government monitors their activities.

Following unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, owners of property previously expropriated by the Communist government of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, including religious organizations, were invited to seek restitution of their property. However, implementation of the process, including for religious institutions, has been extremely limited, and very few properties have been returned to any previous owner.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Official government policy does not prohibit or provide punishment for the possession of non-Islamic religious literature. However, there are unconfirmed reports that foreigners, on occasion, have been harassed by police for possessing such literature. In addition, some members of the security forces occasionally censor the mail of Christian clergy who minister to the foreign community, ostensibly to prevent proselytizing.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country is overwhelmingly Muslim. There are very small numbers of religious minorities, and relations among religious groups generally are amicable. There were no reported incidents of violence or discrimination between the adherents of the two main orders, Zaydi and Shafa'i Islam. Religiously motivated violence is neither incited nor tolerated by the Islamic clergy, except for a small politically motivated clerical minority, often with ties to foreign extremist elements.

The tiny number of religious minorities generally live in harmony with their Muslim neighbors. Apart from a small but undetermined number of Christians and Hindus of South Asian origin in Aden, Jews are the only indigenous religious minority. Their numbers have diminished significantly—from several tens of thousands to a few hundred—due to voluntary emigration over the last 50 years. Although the law makes no distinction, Jews traditionally are restricted to living in one section of a city or village and often are confined to a limited choice of employment, usually farming or handicrafts (primarily silver working). They are respected for their craftsmanship and their silver work is highly prized. Jews may, and do, own land. Traditionally the tribal leaders of the regions in which the Jews have resided are responsible for protecting the Jews in their areas. A failure to provide this protection is considered a serious personal dishonor.

Christian clergy who minister to the foreign community are employed in teaching, social services, and health care.

In July 1998, a gunman killed three nuns belonging to the Sisters of Charity order in Hodeidah. The Government took swift action and immediately arrested the individual. The Government determined that he was deranged and committed him to a psychiatric institution.

A hospital in Jibla operated by the Baptist Church experienced occasional threats and harassment from local extremists who feared that the hospital might be used to spread Christianity. There have been no reports of threats by extremists in several years, and the hospital enjoys widespread community support.

## SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains an active dialog on human rights issues with the Government, NGO's, and others, and discusses religious freedom issues in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officers, including the Ambassador, meet periodically with representatives of the Jewish and Christian communities.



## SOUTH ASIA

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### AFGHANISTAN

*The U.S. Embassy in Kabul has been closed for security reasons since January 1989. Information on the religious freedom situation therefore is limited.*

Freedom of religion is restricted severely. Due to the absence of a constitution and the ongoing civil war, freedom of religion is determined primarily by the unofficial, unwritten, and evolving policies of the warring factions. In 1999 the Taliban, the ultraconservative Islamic movement that controls 90 percent of the country, claimed that it was drafting a new constitution based on Islamic law. Although a spokesperson for the Taliban claimed that the new constitution would ensure the rights of all Muslims and religious minorities, custom and law require affiliation with some religion, and atheism is punishable by death. There was no announcement during the period covered by this report that a constitution was promulgated.

The status of respect for religious freedom continued to deteriorate during the period covered by this report due to the civil war, the policies of the Taliban, and the policies of the Taliban's opponents. In particular, persecution by the Taliban of the Hazara ethnic group, which is predominantly Shi'a Muslim, reflected great religious intolerance. Although the conflict between the Hazaras and the Taliban is political and military as well as religious, and it is not possible to state with certainty that the Taliban engaged in its campaign against the Shi'a solely because of their religious beliefs, the religion of the Hazaras apparently was a significant factor leading to their persecution.

The Taliban sought to impose its extreme interpretation of Islamic observance in areas that it controlled and has declared that all Muslims in areas under Taliban control must abide by the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law. The Taliban relies on a religious police force under the control of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice to enforce rules regarding appearance, dress, employment, access to medical care, behavior, religious practice, and freedom of expression. Persons found to be in violation of the edicts are subject to punishment meted out on the spot, which may include beatings and/or detention. In practice, the rigid policies adopted both by the Taliban and by certain opposition groups has a chilling effect on adherents of other forms of Islam and on those who practice other faiths.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul has been closed since 1989 for security reasons. Although the United States does not recognize any of the warring factions as the Government of Afghanistan, U.S. officials have raised religious freedom issues with representatives of the factions on several occasions. U.S. officials have made similar approaches to other governments, including countries with influence in Afghanistan.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State identified the Taliban as a particularly severe violator of religious freedom.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Freedom of religion is restricted severely. Due to the absence of a constitution and the ongoing civil war, religious freedom is determined primarily by the unofficial, unwritten, and evolving policies of the warring factions. In most parts of the country, the Pashtun-dominated ultraconservative Islamic movement known as the Taliban vigorously enforced its interpretation of Islamic law. The Taliban movement, which controls approximately 90 percent of the country, claimed in mid-1999 that it was drafting a new constitution, based upon the sources of Islamic religious law (Shari'a): the Koran, the Sunna, and Hanafi jurisprudence. A Taliban spokesman has stated that the new constitution would ensure the rights of all Muslims and of religious minorities. However, custom and law require affiliation with some religion, and atheism is considered apostasy and is punishable by death. The small

number of non-Muslim residents who remain in the country may practice their faith but may not proselytize.

Afghanistan's official name, according to the Taliban, is the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; according to the umbrella organization of various smaller anti-Taliban groups, the Northern Alliance, it is the Islamic State of Afghanistan. These names reflect the desire of both factions to promote Islam as the state religion. Taliban leader Mullah Omar carries the title of Commander of the Faithful.

Licensing and registration of religious groups do not appear to be required by the authorities in any part of the country.

#### *Religious Demography*

Reliable data on the country's population is not available. However, informed sources estimate that 85 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim; most of the remaining 15 percent are Shi'a. The Hazara ethnic group is predominantly Shi'a; Shi'a are among the most economically disadvantaged persons in the country. The Shi'a minority want a national government that would give them equal rights as citizens. There are also small numbers of Ismailis living in the central and northern parts of the country. Ismailis are Shi'a, but consider the Aga Khan their spiritual leader.

Traditionally, Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence has been the dominant religion. The Taliban also adheres to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, making it the current dominant religion in the country. For the last 200 years, Sunnis often have looked to the example of the Deoband madrassa (religious school) near Delhi, India. Most of the Taliban leadership attended Deobandi-influenced seminaries in Pakistan. The Deoband school has long sought to purify Islam by discarding supposedly un-Islamic accretions to the faith and reemphasizing the models established in the Koran and the customary practices of the Prophet Mohammed. Additionally, Deobandi scholars often have opposed what they perceive as Western influences. Much of the population adheres to Deobandi-influenced Hanafi Sunnism, but a sizable minority adheres to a more mystical version of Hanafi Sunnism generally known as Sufism. Sufism centers on orders or brotherhoods that follow charismatic religious leaders.

In the past, small communities of Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Christians lived in the country, but most members of these communities have left. Even at their peak, these non-Muslim minorities constituted only 1 percent of the population. Almost all members of the country's small Hindu and Sikh population, which once numbered about 50,000 persons, have emigrated or taken refuge abroad. Non-Muslims such as Hindus and Sikhs are found only in extremely small numbers. They are almost all foreigners, often working as traders, and generally are not disturbed as long as they do not attempt to proselytize. The very few Christians and Jews who live in the country are apparently almost all foreigners who are assigned temporarily to relief work by foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGO's).

Several areas of the country are religiously homogeneous. Sunni Muslim Pashtuns, centered around the city of Kandahar, dominate the south, west, and east of the country. The homeland of the Shi'a Hazaras is in the Hazarajat or the mountainous central highlands around Bamiyan. Badakshan province, in the extreme northeast of the country, traditionally has been an Ismaili region. Other areas, including Kabul, the capital, are more heterogeneous. For example, in and around the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, there is a mix of Sunnis (including Pashtuns, Turkmen, Uzbeks, and Tajiks) and Shi'a (including Hazaras, Qizilbash, and Ismailis).

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

In Taliban-controlled areas authorities have decreed that all Muslims must take part in five daily prayers. Friday noon prayers at mosques are said to be compulsory. Women and girls reportedly are forbidden to enter mosques and therefore must pray at home.

According to Human Rights Watch, in September 1999, the Taliban issued decrees that forbade non-Muslims from building places of worship but allowed them to worship at existing holy sites, forbade non-Muslims from criticizing Muslims, ordered non-Muslims to identify their houses by placing a yellow cloth on their rooftops, forbade non-Muslims from living in the same residence as Muslims, and required that non-Muslim women wear a yellow dress with a special mark so that Muslims could keep their distance. These decrees followed earlier reports that Hindus were required to wear a piece of yellow cloth attached to their clothing to identify their religious identity, and that Sikhs were required to wear some form of identification as well. This system of identification allegedly was imposed to spare non-Muslims from the enforcement of rules that are mandatory for Muslims and from harassment by



agents of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice (PVSV), but reportedly no longer is enforced.

No information is available about any activities by Muslim missionaries in the country. Proselytizing by non-Muslims is prohibited. A small number of foreign Christian groups are present in the country, but they focus on relief work since they are forbidden to proselytize. Conversion from Islam is considered apostasy and is punishable by death. There was no information available about converts, and no information available concerning restrictions on the training of clergy.

The Taliban does not encourage free speech about religious issues or frank discussions that challenge orthodox Sunni views. Publishing and distribution of literature of any kind, including religious material, is rare. The Taliban continues to prohibit music, movies, and television on religious grounds in Taliban-controlled areas. In 1998 television sets, videocassette recorders, videocassettes, audiocassettes, and satellite dishes were outlawed in order to enforce the prohibition. However, subsequent reports indicate that many persons in urban areas around the country own such electronic devices despite the ban.

The sections of the country's educational system that have survived over 20 years of war put considerable emphasis on religion.

When the Taliban took Kabul in September 1996, it immediately issued pronouncements forbidding girls to go to school. According to a United Nations survey, at that time, more than 100,000 girls reportedly attended public school in Kabul from grades kindergarten to 12. Since 1996 the Taliban has eliminated most of the opportunities for girls' education that existed in areas that the Taliban has taken over; however, some girls' schools still operate in rural areas and small towns. The Taliban has decreed that women are not allowed to attend the country's formerly coeducational universities, and one women's university, the Kabul branch of the Peshawar-based Afghan University, was closed by the Taliban after its takeover of Kabul. More than 100 NGO-funded girls' schools and home-based women's vocational projects were closed in Kabul in June 1998. The Taliban stated that schools would not be allowed to teach girls over the age of 8, and that the schools that were closed had violated this rule. In the future, the Taliban stated that girls' schools would be licensed, and that teaching in such schools would be limited to the Koran. Some girls reportedly are receiving an education in informal home schools, which are tolerated by the Taliban authorities in various parts of the country. It also was reported that several girls' schools remain open in Kandahar, although in Herat, which was captured by the Taliban in 1995, girls' schools have remained closed except in the refugee camps maintained by international NGO's. Some families sent girls abroad for education in order to evade the Taliban's prohibitions on education for females in most urban areas. It also has been reported that the ban on women working outside of the home has hampered the education of boys, since 70 percent of the country's teachers were women prior to the advent of Taliban rule.

The Taliban announced in 1998 that foreign Muslim women, including U.N. workers, would be allowed to perform their jobs only if accompanied by a male relative, a move that was not vigorously enforced during the period covered by this report.

At various times, the Taliban has banned certain traditional recreational activities, such as kite flying and playing chess. Dolls, stuffed animals, and photographs are prohibited under the Taliban's interpretation of religious injunctions against representations of living beings; in search of these objects, Taliban soldiers or persons masquerading as Taliban members reportedly have entered private homes without prior notification or informed consent. Health care for both men and women was hampered by the ban on images of humans, which caused the destruction of public education posters and hampered the provision and dissemination of health information in a society with massive illiteracy. However, the Taliban allowed the visual depiction of persons in demining education materials.

The Taliban reportedly has required parents to give their children "Islamic" names.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In the recent past, the mass killings of the mainly Shi'a Hazaras by the Taliban in recently occupied territories in the north in particular, constituted a serious abuse. Although the conflict between the Hazaras and the Taliban is political and military as well as religious, and it is not possible to state with certainty that the Taliban engaged in its campaign of persecution against the Shi'a solely because of their religious beliefs, the religion of the Hazaras apparently was a significant factor leading to their persecution.

Since they took control of Kabul in 1996, the Taliban reportedly has committed numerous human rights violations, particularly against the Hazaras. In September 1997, the Taliban reportedly massacred 70 ethnic Hazara civilians in Qezelabad.

There were reports of mass arrests by the Taliban in Hazara neighborhoods of Kabul in January 1998. There also were credible reports of the massacre of thousands of civilians and prisoners by the Taliban during and after the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998; this massacre reportedly was aimed at ethnic Hazaras. In September 1998, approximately 500 persons were killed as the Taliban gained control of the city of Bamiyan. The Hazaras regained control of Bamiyan in April 1999 following prolonged guerilla-style warfare; however, the Taliban recaptured Bamiyan in May 1999 and reportedly killed a number of Shi'a residents.

There were reports during 1999 and 2000 that there were forced expulsions of ethnic Hazaras and Tajiks from areas controlled or conquered by the Taliban, as well as harassment of these minorities throughout Taliban controlled areas.

The Taliban ruled strictly in areas that it controlled, establishing ad hoc and rudimentary judicial systems. The Taliban established Islamic courts in areas under its control to judge criminal cases and resolve disputes. The courts reportedly dealt with all complaints, relying on the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law and punishments as well as tribal customs. In cases involving murder and rape, convicted prisoners generally were ordered executed, although relatives of the victim could instead choose to accept other restitution. Decisions of the courts reportedly were final. Taliban courts imposed their extreme interpretation of Islamic law and punishments following swift summary trials. Murderers were subjected to public executions, which sometimes took place before crowds of up to 30,000 persons at Kabul Stadium. Executions sometimes were carried out by throat slitting, a punishment that, at times, was inflicted by the victims' families. Thieves were subjected to public amputations of either one hand or one foot, or both. The U.N. Special Rapporteur for Torture noted particular concern about the use of amputation as a form of punishment by Taliban authorities. Adulterers were stoned to death or publicly whipped with 100 lashes. According to Human Rights Watch, several men who were found guilty of homosexual acts were crushed by having walls toppled over them by a tank; one man who survived the ordeal after being left under the rubble for two hours reportedly was allowed to go free.

The Taliban seeks to impose its extreme interpretation of Islamic observance in areas that it controlled and has declared that all Muslims in areas under Taliban control must abide by the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law. The Taliban announces its proclamations and edicts through broadcasts on the Taliban's "Radio Shariat," and relies on a religious police force under the control of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice to enforce rules regarding appearance, dress, employment, access to medical care, behavior, religious practice, and freedom of expression. Members of the PVSF, which was raised to the status of a Ministry in May 1998, regularly check persons on the street in order to ascertain that individuals are conforming to such Taliban edicts. Persons found to be in violation of the edicts are subject to punishment meted out on the spot, which may include beatings and/or detention. In practice, the rigid policies adopted both by the Taliban and by certain opposition groups has a chilling effect on adherents of other forms of Islam and on those who practice other faiths. Enforcement of Taliban social strictures is much stricter in the cities, especially in Kabul, and looser in rural areas, where more is left to local custom.

Prayer is mandatory for all, and those who are observed not praying at appointed times or who are late attending prayer are subject to punishment, including severe beatings. There were reports in 1998 that PVSF members in Kabul stopped persons on the street and quizzed them to determine if they knew how to recite various Koranic prayers.

According to Taliban regulations, men's beards must protrude farther than would a fist clamped at the base of the chin. Men also must wear head coverings and must not have long hair. A man who has shaved or cut his beard may be imprisoned for 10 days and be required to undergo Islamic instruction. Several civil service employees reportedly were fired in 1997 for cutting their beards. All students at Kabul University reportedly are required to have beards in order to study there (no female students are allowed). There also are credible reports that Taliban members gave forced haircuts to males in Kabul.

Women and girls suffered the brunt of the Taliban's extreme interpretation and implementation of Shari'a (Islamic law). Women were required to don a head-to-toe garment known as the burqa, which has only a mesh screen for vision, when in public. While in some rural areas this was the normal garment for women, the requirement to wear the burqa represented a significant change in practice when imposed in urban areas. According to a decree announced by the religious police in 1997, women found outside the home who were not covered properly would be punished severely, along with their family elders. In Kabul and elsewhere, women found in public who were not wearing the burqa, or whose burqas did not cover their ankles

properly, were beaten by Taliban militiamen. Some poor women cannot afford the cost of a burqa, and thus are forced to remain at home or risk beatings if they go out without one. There are reports that disabled women, who need a prosthesis or other aid to walk, are virtually homebound because they cannot wear the burqa properly over the prosthesis or other aid. The absence of a burqa has resulted in the inability of some women to get necessary medical care; at least one woman reportedly died because she did not have a burqa and thus could not leave her home. In a 1998 survey, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) found that 22 percent of the female respondents surveyed reported being detained and abused by the Taliban; of these incidents, 72 percent were related to alleged infractions of the Taliban's dress code for women. Most of these incidents reportedly resulted in detentions that lasted 1 hour or less, but 84 percent also resulted in public beatings, and 2 percent resulted in torture. Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed reported that they had reduced their public activities drastically during 1998 in Kabul. A few reports in 1997 indicated that some women in Herat had covered their heads with large scarves that leave the face uncovered and had not faced reprisals, and many women in rural areas also have been observed without burqas but with scarves covering their heads. Women are not allowed to wear white burqas, white socks, or white shoes. Women reportedly were beaten if their shoe heels clicked when they walked. All of these restrictions apparently are not enforced strictly upon the nomad population of several hundred thousand or upon the few female foreigners, who nonetheless must cover their hair, arms, and legs. Women in their homes also must not be visible from the street; the Taliban requires that houses with female occupants have their windows painted over. However, in early 1999 there were reports that the Taliban may be easing some of the restrictions on women's dress.

Women were expected to leave their homes only while escorted by a male relative, further curtailing the appearance and movement of women in public even when wearing approved clothing. Women appearing in public without a male relative ran the risk of beatings by the Taliban. Women are not allowed to drive, and taxi drivers reportedly are beaten if they take unescorted women as passengers. Women only may ride on buses designated as women's buses; there are reportedly not enough of these buses to meet the demand, and the wait for women's buses can be long. In 1998 the Taliban ordered that bus drivers who take female passengers must encase the bus in curtains, and put up a curtain so that the female passengers cannot see or be seen by the driver. Bus drivers also were told that they must employ boys under the age of 15 to collect fares from female passengers, and that neither the drivers nor the fare collectors were to mingle with the passengers.

When the Taliban took Kabul in 1996, it immediately issued pronouncements forbidding women to work, including female doctors and nurses in hospitals. In a few cases, the Taliban relented and allowed women to work in health care occupations under restricted circumstances. The prohibition on women working outside of the home has been especially difficult for the large numbers of widows left by 20 years of civil war; there are an estimated 30,000 widows in Kabul alone. Many women reportedly have been reduced to selling all of their possessions and to begging to feed their families. Taliban gender restrictions continued to interfere with the delivery of humanitarian assistance to women and girls, as well. In 1997 the Taliban asked that international assistance be provided to women through their close male relatives rather than directly. Male relatives also must obtain the permission of the PVSF for female home-based employment.

While most citizens lack any access to adequate medical facilities, such access was made even more restrictive for women under Taliban rule. In 1997 the Taliban announced a policy of segregating men and women in hospitals and directed most hospitals in Kabul to cease services to women and to discharge female staff. Services for women were to be provided by a single hospital still partially under construction—a drastic reduction in access to, and the quality of, health care for women. Several orders concerning the provision of emergency and nonemergency medical aid for women were given and reversed in 1997. Women were permitted to seek treatment from female medical personnel working in designated women's wards or clinics; they were permitted to see male doctors if accompanied by a male relative. Erratic reversals in policy continued throughout 1998, with the effect that women often were prevented from obtaining adequate medical care. In June 1998, the Taliban prohibited all doctors from treating female patients in the absence of a patient's husband, father, or brother. This decree, while not universally enforced, made treatment extremely difficult for Kabul's widows, many of whom have lost all such male family members. Furthermore, even when a woman is allowed to be treated by a male doctor, he may not see or touch her, which drastically limits the possibility of any meaningful treatment.

The Taliban's restrictions on medical treatment by male health professionals have had a detrimental effect on children. According to PHR, children sometimes are denied medical care when the authorities do not let male doctors visit children's wards, which may be located within the women's ward of a hospital, or do not allow male doctors to see children accompanied only by their mothers.

While some Taliban leaders have claimed tolerance of religious minorities, there reportedly have been restrictions imposed upon Shi'a Muslims in Taliban-controlled territory, although not necessarily on a uniform basis. However, the Taliban allegedly has ordered Shi'a to confine their Ashura commemorations during the month of Muharram to their mosques and to avoid the public processions that are an integral part of Ashura in other countries with Shi'a populations.

There also are unconfirmed reports that the Taliban has occupied and "cleaned" Shi'a mosques for the use of Sunnis, including a Shi'a mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998.

No information is available on the numbers of religious detainees or prisoners. There is no indication that religious detainees or prisoners are charged formally as part of their incarceration. However, the Taliban is reported to hold many Hazara Shi'a prisoners, who were detained as a result of the country's civil war and not solely on the basis of their religion.

The Ismaili community also fought for the Northern Alliance against the Taliban and suffered when the Taliban occupied territories once held by Ismaili forces. There have been reports of the mistreatment of Ismailis at the hands of the Taliban.

The status of respect for religious freedom continued to deteriorate during the period covered by this report due to the civil war, the policies of the Taliban, and the policies of the Taliban's opponents.

Very little information is available about territory held by the Northern Alliance, which controls much less territory than the Taliban and therefore affects a smaller percentage of the population. However, some groups within the Northern Alliance also are dedicated to enforcing strict adherence to Islamic law. In past years, some members of the Northern Alliance were responsible for atrocities against Taliban forces during the war for control of the country.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of any faction's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the different branches of Islam in the country are problematic. Historically, the minority Shi'a faced discrimination from the majority Sunni population. Most Shi'a Muslims are members of the Hazara ethnic group, which traditionally has been segregated from the rest of society. The country's history contains many instances of conflict between the Hazaras and other Afghans. These conflicts often have had economic and political roots but regularly have acquired sectarian dimensions. The Hazaras fear that Taliban rule would deprive their community of its religious, political, and economic rights. However, many Shi'a, including a sizable community in Kabul, enjoy limited religious freedom.

For the most part, the current factions in the country are divided along religious and ethnic lines. The Taliban is made up mainly of Sunni Muslim Pashtuns; the Taliban's chief opposition is the Northern Alliance, which, under the nominal leadership of Burhanuddin Rabbani, is made up of various smaller anti-Taliban groups. Rabbani and his Defense Minister, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, are both Tajiks and control a largely Tajik-inhabited territory in the northeast. Other members of the Northern Alliance include ethnic Hazara, Uzbeks, Turkmen and other smaller groups. The Hazara and some other smaller ethnic groups are Shi'a Muslims. Within the respective factions, there are economic, political, and military advantages to belonging to the dominant faith or ethnic group in a given faction. Conversely, members of a different faith may encounter disadvantages if they seek full membership in a particular faction. The Taliban has brought several prominent Shi'a commanders into its organization in an effort to counter the perception that it is an exclusively Sunni Pashtun movement. The Northern Alliance includes several Pashtuns in prominent roles, although its supporters largely come from the non-Pashtun minorities.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul has been closed since 1989 for security reasons. The United States maintains contact with all factions but does not recognize any as the

Government of Afghanistan. U.S. officials have raised religious freedom issues with representatives of the factions, including the Taliban, on several occasions and particularly have called for the protection of the rights of religious minorities. U.S. officials have made similar approaches to other governments regarding the behavior of the Taliban, including countries with influence in Afghanistan.

The Department of State has raised the issue of Taliban abuses committed against religious minorities in international forums and has voted in favor of U.N. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions criticizing abuses committed against Shi'a by the Taliban. In August 2000, the Department of State announced that it was doubling its refugee resettlement ceiling for the Near East and South Asian regions for the year 2000, in part to allow more Afghan women and their families into the United States.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State identified the Taliban as a particularly severe violator of religious freedom.

## BANGLADESH

The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion but also stipulates the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government respects this provision in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Citizens generally are free to practice the religion of their choice; however, members of the majority Muslim population sometimes commit acts of violence against members of religious minorities. Violence against Ahmadiyas increased during the period covered by this report. Police, who generally are ineffective in upholding law and order, often are slow to assist in such cases.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion but also stipulates the right—subject to law, public order, and morality—to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government respects this provision in practice.

Religious organizations are not required to register with the Government; however, all nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), including religious organizations, are required to register with the NGO Affairs Bureau if they receive foreign money for social development projects. The Government has the legal ability to cancel the registration of an NGO or to take other action against it; such powers rarely are used and have not affected NGO's with religious affiliations.

#### *Religious Demography*

Sunni Muslims constitute 88 percent of the population. About 10 percent of the population are Hindu. The rest are Christian (mostly Catholic) and Buddhist; these faiths are found predominantly in the tribal (non-Bengali) populations of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. There are small populations of Shi'a Muslims, Sikhs, Baha'is, and Ahmadiyas. Estimates of these populations vary widely, from a few hundred up to 100,000 adherents for each faith.

Family laws concerning marriage, divorce, and adoption differ depending on the religion of the person involved.

Religion exerts a powerful influence on politics, and the Government is sensitive to the Muslim consciousness of the majority of its citizens. Religion is taught in schools, and children have the right to be taught their own religion. In practice, schools with very small numbers of religious minority students often work out arrangements with local churches or temples, which then direct religious studies outside school hours. The country celebrates holy days from the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian faiths as national holidays.

The Government allows various religions to establish places of worship, to train clergy, to travel for religious purposes, and to maintain links with coreligionists abroad.

The law permits citizens to proselytize. However, strong social resistance to conversion from Islam means that most missionary efforts by non-Muslims are aimed at Hindus and tribal groups.

Foreign missionaries may work in the country, but their right to proselytize is not protected in the Constitution, and some foreign missionaries face problems obtaining visas. There are no financial penalties imposed on the basis of religious beliefs. However, many Hindus complain that they have been unable to recover land-holdings lost because of discrimination in the application of the law, especially the Vested Property Act. Property ownership, particularly among Hindus, has been a contentious issue since independence in 1971, when many Hindus lost land because of anti-Hindu discrimination in the application of the law. The Vested Property Act is a vestige of Pakistani law, which allowed "enemy" (in practice, Hindu) lands to be expropriated by the State. The law was suspended in 1984, but some claims allegedly have been backdated. Prior to its 1996 election victory, the Awami League promised to repeal the Vested Property Act, but to date the Awami League Government has not done so.

Violence against Ahmadiyas increased during the period covered by this report, and police have not always intervened promptly to prevent harassment of Ahmadiyas (see Section II). In the past, the Government sometimes failed to take action against Islamic extremists who have attacked women, members of religious minorities, and development workers (see Section II).

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the religious communities generally are amicable. Persons who practice different religions often join each others' festivals and celebrations. Shi'a Muslims practice their faith without interference from Sunnis. Hindu-Buddhist-Christian unity councils exist at the local and national levels. Nevertheless, clashes between religious groups occasionally occur. There have been, in recent years, cases of violence directed against the religious minority communities that have resulted in the loss of lives and property. Police, who generally are ineffective in upholding law and order, often are slow to assist in such cases. Such intercommunal violence has caused some members of religious minorities to depart the country, primarily Hindus emigrating to India where many have relatives; however this phenomenon is rare.

The Ahmadiyas, whom many mainstream Muslims consider heretical, have been the target of increased attacks and harassment. In 1999 several mosques belonging to the Ahmadiya sect were attacked. On October 8, 1999, a bomb killed six Ahmadiyas who were attending Friday prayers at their mosque in Khulna. The only suspect questioned by police was a fellow Ahmadiya who later was released. No other suspects have been questioned, and the case remains unresolved. In November 1999, Sunni Muslims ransacked an Ahmadiya mosque near Natore, in western Bangladesh. In subsequent clashes between Ahmadiyas and Sunnis, 35 persons were injured. Ahmadiyas regained control of their mosque and filed a criminal case against 30 persons allegedly responsible for the conflict. That case remains pending. After a January 1999 attack on an Ahmadiya mosque in Kushtia, two police officials were disciplined for failing to discharge their duties in controlling the incident. Ahmadiya leaders report that their mosque remains under the control of local police and Ahmadiyas are unable to worship there 15 months after the original attack.

Islamic extremists occasionally have attacked women, members of religious minorities, and development workers. The Government sometimes has failed to criticize, investigate, and prosecute the perpetrators of these attacks. The Government responded quickly, but ineffectively, after an April 1998 attack on a Catholic school in Dhaka.

Some members of the Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities continue to perceive and experience discrimination from the Muslim majority.

Religious minorities are disadvantaged in practice in such areas as access to government jobs and political office. Selection boards in the government services do not have minority group representation. The current Government has appointed a few Hindus to senior civil service positions. However, religious minorities remain underrepresented in government jobs, especially at the higher levels of the civil and foreign services. Very few members of the armed forces are non-Muslims.

Feminist author Taslima Nasreen, whose writings and statements provoked death threats from some Islamic groups in 1993 and 1994, returned to the country in September 1998, after having lived abroad since 1994. Nasreen immediately went into hiding. The Government has taken no action against those who issued death threats against her in 1993 and 1994, even though such threats may violate the law. Following Nasreen's return, there were a number of small demonstrations by Islamic groups calling for her arrest and punishment by death. The Government provided Nasreen protection from possible threats. Despite such protection, in early November 1998, the leader of the Chittagong branch of the Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest Islamic party, personally offered a reward for information as to her whereabouts. The central Jamaat office in Dhaka stated that the Jamaat did not approve of the reward offer. The Government did not attempt to prosecute Nasreen for charges filed by authorities in 1994 under a section of the Penal Code that stipulates punishment for anyone convicted of intentionally insulting religious beliefs. However, a private citizen filed similar charges in 1994, and a judge issued an arrest warrant in that case after Nasreen's September 1998 return. The warrant never was executed, and Nasreen later requested and received anticipatory bail from the High Court. She was allowed to leave the country freely in January 1999. She lives abroad in self-imposed exile. On August 12, 1999, the Bangladesh government banned the import, sale, and distribution of "My Childhood," Nasreen's latest book. The government ban cited the likelihood that the book would inflame passions and offend religious sentiments in the Muslim community.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains a dialog with government, religious, and minority community representatives to promote religious freedom and to discuss problems therewith. On an informal basis, the Embassy also has assisted some U.S. Christian-affiliated relief organizations in guiding paperwork for schools and other projects through government channels. The Government has been receptive to discussion of such subjects and generally helpful in resolving problems.

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## BHUTAN

The law provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Drukpa sect of the Kagyupa School, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, is the state religion, and the law prohibits religious conversions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

In Bhutan, the Drukpa sect of the Kagyupa School, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, is the state religion, and the law prohibits religious conversions. Citizens of other faiths may not proselytize.

There are no formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Bhutan, but the U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government informally in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The law provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Drukpa sect of the Kagyupa School, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, is the state religion, and the law prohibits religious conversions. Citizens of other faiths may not proselytize.

Religious communities must secure government licenses before constructing new places of worship, but there were no reports to suggest that this process was not impartial. The Government provides financial assistance for the construction of Drukpa Kagyupa and Ningmapa Buddhist temples and shrines. In the early 1990's, the Government provided funds for the construction of new Hindu temples and centers of Sanskrit and Hindu learning and for the renovation of existing temples and places of learning.

The Government subsidizes monasteries and shrines of the Drukpa sect and provides aid to about one-third of the Kingdom's 12,000 monks. By statute, 10 seats in the 150-seat National Assembly and 2 seats on the 11-member Royal Advisory Council are reserved for monks of the Drukpa sect.

All government civil servants, regardless of religion, are required to take an oath of allegiance to the King, the country, and the people. The oath is without religiously specific content, but a Buddhist lama administers it.

#### *Religious Demography*

About two-thirds of the declared population of 600,000 practice either Drukpa Kagyupa or Ningmapa Buddhism. The Drukpa sect is practiced predominantly in the western and central parts of the country, although there are adherents in other parts of the country. The inhabitants of the western and central parts of the country are mainly, but not exclusively, ethnic Ngalops—the descendants of Tibetan immigrants who predominate in government and the civil service and whose cultural norms and dress have been declared by the monarchy to be the standard for all Bhutanese.

The Ningmapa school of Mahayana Buddhism is practiced predominantly in the eastern part of the country, although there are adherents in other parts of the country, including the royal family. Monks and monasteries of this school also receive some state funding. Most of those living in the east are ethnic Sharchops—the descendants of those thought to be the country's original inhabitants. Several Sharchops hold high rank in the Government, the National Assembly, and the court system.

There is a tradition of respect among many citizens for the teachings of an animist and shamanistic faith called Bon; the arrival of this faith to the country predates that of Buddhism. Bon priests still can be found in the country, but it is unclear how many citizens adhere to this faith. Bon rituals sometimes are included in the observance of Buddhist festivals.

Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, are present in small numbers throughout the country. There is only one Christian church building in the country, in the south, where the only concentration of Christians sufficiently large to sustain a church building is located. Elsewhere, families and individuals practice their religion at home.

About one-third of the population, ethnic Nepalese who live mainly in the south, practice Hinduism. The Shaivite, Vaishnavite, Shakta, Ghanapath, Pauranic, and Vedic schools are represented among Hindus.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Foreign missionaries are not permitted to proselytize. However, international Christian relief organizations and Jesuit priests are active in education and humanitarian activities.

Buddhist religious teaching, of both the Drukpa Kagyupa and the Ningmapa sects, is permitted in schools; the teaching of other religious traditions is not, according to dissidents living outside of the country. These same sources claim that the import into the country of printed religious matter is restricted and that the Government bars all but Buddhist religious texts from entering.

The passports of members of minority religions cite the holder's religion, and applicants for government services sometimes are asked their religion before services are rendered.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

There have been reports in the past that police have used unwarranted lethal force on peaceful demonstrations, resulting in the death of at least one monk. Monks also reportedly have been tortured while in prison.

Dissidents living outside of the country contend that the Government underreports the number of ethnic Nepalese in the country, and that the country's actual population is between 650,000 and 700,000. The ethnic Nepalese were subject to discrimination by the authorities in the late 1980's and early 1990's when many were driven from their homes and forcibly expelled from the country. The root causes of this official discrimination and the expulsions were cultural, economic, and political; however, to the degree that their Hinduism identified them as members of the ethnic Nepalese minority, religion was also a factor. The Government contends that many of those expelled in 1991 were illegal immigrants who had no right to citizenship or residency in the country. Some 90,000 ethnic Nepalese continue to live in refugee camps in eastern Nepal and are seeking to return to their homes in Bhutan. Although the refugees have not been permitted to return to the country, ethnic Nepalese Hindus remaining in the country are free to practice their religion. The King has declared major Hindu festivals to be national holidays and the royal family participates in them. The Government also provides some scholarships for Sanskrit studies in Hindu universities in India.

The Government also began a program of resettling Buddhist citizens from other parts of the country on land in the south vacated by the expelled ethnic Nepalese



now living in refugee camps in Nepal. Human rights groups maintain that this action prejudices any eventual negotiated return of the refugees to Bhutan. The Government maintains that this is not its first resettlement program and that citizens who are ethnic Nepalese from the south sometimes are resettled on land in other parts of the country. The motivation for this official discrimination appears to be economic and political; however, to the degree that the Hinduism of the ethnic Nepalese identifies them, religion is also a factor.

A resolution adopted by the National Assembly in July 1997 prohibits family members of ethnic Nepalese refugees from Bhutan residing in camps in eastern Nepal, who are still resident in the country, from holding jobs with the Government or in the armed forces. According to the Government, the resolution was not intended to apply to any specific ethnic group, but was aimed at those whose views reflected antigovernment sentiment. Under the resolution, those relatives of ethnic Nepali refugees holding government jobs were retired involuntarily. For the purposes of this resolution, the Government defined a family member as a parent, child, sibling, or a member of the same household. The Government states that 429 civil servants, many of them ethnic Nepalis, were retired compulsorily in accordance with the National Assembly resolution and that the program was terminated in November 1998. While the ethnic Nepalis retired in this fashion were mainly Hindu, and the Government and the majority of the society are generally Buddhist, the motivation for this official discrimination appears to be mainly economic and political in nature and does not appear to be related to the practice of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Governmental discrimination against ethnic Nepalese in the late 1980's and early 1990's arose in part from a desire to preserve the country's Buddhist culture from the growth of the ethnic Nepalese population, with its different cultural and religious traditions. That preoccupation on the part of the Government and many Buddhists is still present today. It is reflected in official and societal efforts to impose the dress and cultural norms of the Ngalop ethnic group on all citizens. While there are no known reports of the repetition of the excesses of the late 1980's and early 1990's, societal and governmental pressure for conformity with Drukpa Kagyupa norms is prevalent. The failure of the Government to permit the return of ethnic Nepalese refugees has tended to reinforce societal prejudices against this group, as has the Government's policy on forced retirement of refugee family members in government service and the resettlement of Buddhists on land vacated by expelled ethnic Nepalese in the south.

There have been some efforts at promoting interfaith understanding. There are regular exchanges between monks of the two schools of Buddhism represented in the country. The King's example of making Hindu festivals official holidays and observing them also has had a positive impact on citizens' attitudes.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

There are no formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Bhutan. There are informal contacts between the two governments ranging from the level of cabinet secretary to that of embassy officer. During many of these exchanges, governmental discrimination against the ethnic Nepalese minority has been discussed. The issue of religious freedom has not been raised explicitly.

## INDIA

The Constitution provides for secular government and the protection of religious freedom, and the central Government generally respects these provisions in practice; however, it sometimes does not act effectively to counter societal attacks against religious minorities and attempts by state and local governments to limit that freedom. This failure results in part from the legal constraints inherent in the country's federal structure, and in part from the demands placed on the at times ineffective

law enforcement and justice systems. Ineffective investigation and prosecution of attacks on religious minorities is interpreted by some extremist elements as a signal that such violence is likely to go unpunished.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

India is a secular state in which all faiths generally enjoy freedom of worship; government policy does not favor any religious group. However, tensions between Muslims and Hindus, and increasingly, between Hindus and Christians, continue to pose a challenge to the concepts of secularism, tolerance, and diversity on which the State was founded.

The Government is led by a coalition called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which has pledged to respect India's traditions of secular government and religious tolerance. However, the leading party in the coalition is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist political party with links to Hindu extremist groups that have been implicated in violent acts against Christians and Muslims. The BJP also leads state governments in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. Human rights groups and others have suggested that the response by authorities in these states to acts of violence against religious minorities by Hindu extremist groups has been ineffective, at least in part because of the links between these groups and the BJP, and have noted that the ineffective investigation and prosecution of such incidents may encourage violent actions by extremist groups. Governments at state and local levels only partially respect religious freedom. A number of such governments considered legislation during the period covered by this report that would limit religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There are no registration requirements for religions. Legally mandated benefits are assigned to certain groups, including some groups defined by their religion.

There are many religions and a large variety of denominations, groups, and subgroups in the country, but Hinduism is the dominant religion. Under the Constitution, the Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh faiths are considered different from the Hindu religion, but the Constitution often is interpreted as defining Hinduism to include the Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh faiths. This interpretation has been a contentious issue, particularly among the Sikh community.

##### *Religious Demography*

According to 1999 government statistics (based on the 1991 national census), Hindus constitute 82.4 percent of the population, Muslims 12.7 percent, Christians 2.3 percent, Sikhs 2 percent, Buddhists 0.7 percent, Jains 0.4 percent, and others, including Parsis, Jews, and Baha'is, 0.4 percent. Hinduism has a large number of branches, including the Sanatan and Arya Samaj groups. Slightly over 90 percent of the Muslims are Sunni; the rest are Shi'a. Buddhists include followers of the Mahayana and Hinayana schools, and there are both Catholic and Protestant Christians. Tribal groups, which for the sake of government statistics generally are included among Hindus, often practice traditional indigenous religions. Hindus and Muslims are spread throughout the country, although large Muslim populations are found in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, and Muslims are a majority in Jammu and Kashmir. Christian concentrations are found in the northeastern states, as well as in the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Goa. Three small northeastern states have large Christian majorities—Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. Sikhs are a majority in the state of Punjab. In January 1999, the previous National Commission for Minorities (NCM) chairman Tahir Mahmoud announced that the NCM had recommended that Hindus be declared minorities in six states—Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland; this would help the NCM to take cognizance of the problems of Hindus in those states. As of mid-2000 the Government still was considering the proposal; however, it had not gone into effect.

Over the years, lower castes and Dalits (formerly called "untouchables") (see Section II) frequently have converted to other faiths because they viewed conversion as a means to achieve higher social status. Dalit leaders frequently have encouraged their followers to convert to Buddhism, Christianity, and other faiths without a caste tradition. Yet lower caste and Dalit converts continue to be viewed by both

their coreligionists and Hindus through the prism of caste. Converts are widely regarded as belonging to the caste of their ancestors.

Animosities within and between religious communities in India have roots that are centuries old, and these tensions—at times exacerbated by poverty, class, and ethnic differences—have erupted into periodic violence throughout the country's 53-year history. The Government makes some effort to prevent these incidents and to restore communal harmony when such incidents occur, but these efforts are not entirely successful. The Government has taken steps to promote interfaith understanding, which include the creation of the National Integration Council (in 1962 as a non-statutory body with an objective of maintaining social tranquility and communal harmony), the National Commission for Minorities (as a non-statutory body in 1978 and statutorily by Parliament act in 1992), and the National Human Rights Commission (founded by an act of Parliament in 1993).

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act makes it an offense to use any religious site for political purposes or to use temples for harboring persons accused or convicted of crimes. While specifically designed to deal with Sikh places of worship in Punjab, the law applies to all religious sites. In addition the state of Uttar Pradesh passed the "Religious Buildings and Places Bill" during the State Assembly Budget Session of March-May 2000. The bill requires a state government-endorsed permit before construction of any religious building could begin in the state. The bill's supporters say that its aim is to curb the use of Muslim institutions by Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups, but the measure has become a controversial political issue among all religious groups in northern India. Also during the period covered by this report, West Bengal's government decided to implement 15-year-old legislation that required any person desiring to construct a place of worship to seek permission from the district magistrate; anyone intending to convert a personal place of worship to one for the community also requires the district magistrate's permission.

The current legal system accommodates minority religions' personal status laws; there are different personal laws for different religious communities. Religion-specific laws pertain in matters of marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. For example, Muslim personal status law governs many noncriminal matters involving Muslims, including family law, inheritance, and divorce.

The personal status laws of the religious communities sometimes discriminate against women. Under Islamic law, a Muslim husband may divorce his wife spontaneously and unilaterally; there is no such provision for women. Islamic law also allows a man to have up to four wives but prohibits polyandry. Under the Indian Divorce Act of 1869 a Christian woman may demand divorce only in the case of spousal abuse and certain categories of adultery; for a Christian man, a wife's adultery alone is sufficient.

The Government currently is reviewing the legislation on marriage and drafted the "Christian Marriage Bill" in early 2000. The bill would replace the Indian Divorce Act of 1869 (sic), which is widely criticized as biased against women. If enacted it would place limitations on interfaith marriages and specify penalties, such as 10 years imprisonment, for clergymen who contravene its provisions. The current form of the bill states that no marriage in which one party is a non-Christian may be celebrated in a church. The bill was not introduced during the most recent Parliament session in March-May 2000 due to the strong objections and reservations of the Christian community.

There is no national law that bars proselytizing by Christian citizens. Foreign missionaries generally can renew their visas, but since the mid-1960's the Government has refused to admit new resident foreign missionaries. New arrivals currently enter as tourists on short-term visas. As of January 1993 (more current figures are not available), there were 1,923 registered foreign Christian missionaries. During the period covered by this report, as in the past, state officials refused to issue permits for foreign Christian missionaries to enter some northeastern states. This restriction is not specifically levied against Christians—many foreigners, including diplomats, are refused permits to the country's northeast on the grounds of political instability in the region. In September 1999, the Government's Ministry of Home Affairs ordered a 57-year-old American priest to leave the country. This individual, Father Anthony Raymond Ceresko, a teacher at a seminary in Bangalore, entered the country in 1991 and had been able to renew his residence permit every year until 1999. Ceresko left the country on September 17, 1999. In addition to foreign missionaries, several Christian relief organizations have been hampered by bureaucratic obstacles in getting visas renewed for foreign relief work.

Missionaries and religious organizations must comply with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), which restricts funding from abroad and, therefore, the ability of certain nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) to finance their activities. The Government is empowered to ban a religious organization if it has violated the FCRA, has provoked intercommunity friction, or has been involved in terrorism or sedition. There is no ban on professing or propagating religious beliefs, but speaking publicly against other beliefs is considered dangerous to public order, and is prohibited.

The BJP, which has led two coalition national governments since March 1998, is one of a number of offshoots of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), an organization that espouses a return to Hindu values and cultural norms. Members of the BJP, the RSS, and other affiliated organizations have been implicated in incidents of violence and discrimination against Christians and Muslims. The BJP and RSS express respect and tolerance for other religions; however, the RSS in particular opposes conversions from Hinduism and believes that all citizens should adhere to Hindu cultural values. The BJP officially agrees that the caste system should be eradicated, but many of its members are ambivalent about this. Most BJP leaders, including Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Home Minister L.K. Advani, also are RSS members, as are the chief ministers of the state governments in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Himachal Pradesh. The BJP's traditional cultural agenda has included calls for construction of a new Hindu temple to replace an ancient Hindu temple that was believed to have stood on the site of a mosque in Ayodhya that was destroyed by a Hindu mob in 1992; for the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution, which grants special rights to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state; and for the enactment of a uniform civil code that would apply to members of all religions. All of these proposals are opposed strongly by some minority religious groups.

While the BJP at the national level has not included its traditional agenda items in the program of government of the coalition Government it leads, some Christian groups have noted the coincidence of its coming to power and an increase in complaints of discrimination against minority religious communities. These groups also claim that BJP officials at state and local levels have become increasingly unresponsive in investigating charges of religious discrimination and in prosecuting those persons responsible.

The degree to which the BJP's nationalist Hindu agenda is felt throughout the country with respect to religious minorities varies depending on the region. State governments continue to attach a high priority to maintaining law and order and monitoring intercommunity relations at the district level. The four southern states are ruled by political parties with strong secular and prominority views. Each of these parties—the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh, the Communist Party in Kerala, and the Congress Party in Karnataka—has a history of support for religious minorities and has attempted to assuage religious minority fears about religious tension in the rest of the country. Such fears were aroused when the DMK and TDP entered the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with the BJP during the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. However, both parties subsequently took pains to reaffirm their commitment to secularism and to allay apprehensions from their religious minority supporters.

The southern branches of the BJP generally take a more moderate position on minority issues, but religious groups in the region still allege that since the BJP's rise to power in the national Government, some government bureaucrats have begun to enforce laws selectively to the detriment of religious minorities. The groups cite numerous examples of discrimination, such as biased interpretations of postal regulations, including removal of postal subsidies; refusals to allocate land for the building of churches; and heightened scrutiny of NGO's to ensure that foreign contributions are made according to the law. In August 1999, the Union Home Ministry banned the biennial meeting of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation in Kottayam, Kerala, after organizers neglected to seek Home Ministry permission to hold the conference. Also, Muslim leaders in Hyderabad allege that Hindu extremists in the Andhra Pradesh police force have harassed Muslim youth and students at religious schools under the pretext of investigating plots by the ISI, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (intelligence service).

The eastern part of the country presented a varied picture with regard to religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and the political leanings of the state governments in the eastern region did not appear to correlate with the level of protection for religious freedom. In Orissa, which has acquired notoriety for violence against religious minorities (particularly after the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young children there in January 1999), the communal situation remained relatively unchanged during the period covered by

this report, despite the installation of a BJP-Biju Janata Dal (BJD) government in February 2000. The Orissa government in November 2000 notified churches that religious conversions could not take place without notifying the local police and district magistrate. The Orissa Freedom of Religion Act of 1967 contains a provision requiring a monthly government report on the number of conversions, but this provision previously had not been enforced. (After a conversion has been reported to the District Magistrate, the report is forwarded to the authorities and a local police officer conducts an inquiry. The police officer can recommend in favor of or against such intended conversion, often as the sole arbitrator on the individual's right to freedom of religion; if conversion is judged to have taken place without permission or with coercion, the authorities may take penal action.) In West Bengal, Marxist rulers could not prevent reconversions of religious minorities by Hindus in some districts. Bihar was peaceful with regard to religious minorities with the exception of two seemingly unrelated events in September 1999. The assault of a nun by 2 young men because of her religion was followed on September 24, 1999 by a silent protest staged by nuns in Patna against the deletion of the names of 150 nuns and 5 priests from voters' lists. In Tripura there were several cases of reverse persecution of non-Christians by Christian members of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), a militant tribal group that often is evangelical. For example, NLFT tribal insurgents have banned Hindu and Muslim festivals in areas that they control, cautioned women not to wear traditional Hindu tribal attire, and banned indigenous forms of worship. In Assam, where the number of Muslims is increasing rapidly, the issue of Bangladeshi migrants (who generally are Muslim) has become exceedingly sensitive among the Assamese (predominantly Hindu) population, which feels increasingly outnumbered.

In the west, mostly in Gujarat, incidents of intercommunity strife continued; however, there were fewer incidents than occurred in December 1998 and January 1999. There were no major outbreaks of violence and no instances where the state government was perceived as supporting or tolerating actions aimed against religious minorities. On May 14, 2000, the Gujarat and national governments pledged to protect religious minorities; Union Home Minister L.K. Advani said that if any "untoward incidents" occurred, the Government would not spare those responsible. However, there were few arrests or convictions in connection with violent incidents against religious minorities. Leaders of several Hindu nationalist organizations in Gujarat alleged that the state's government was, in fact, being very harsh on Hindus and was placating Muslims whenever Hindu-Muslim skirmishes broke out.

A January 2000 decision by the Gujarat state government to revoke the ban on the participation of government employees in RSS activities was widely criticized, as was the well-publicized participation of the state's chief minister at an RSS rally that month. In May 2000, the government of Gujarat withdrew permission for state government workers to engage in RSS activities. In March 2000, the government of Gujarat convinced a BJP legislator to withdraw a bill that sought to regulate Christian missionary activity within the state; the bill was written to prohibit "forced" or "induced" conversions—a crime that would have been punishable by a fine and up to 3 years in prison. Despite these steps by the state and national governments to address communal concerns, many in the minority communities continued to express unease about BJP rule.

In the north, there were several incidents in April 2000 in which Hindu groups attacked Christian institutions (see Section II). These incidents were the first signs of Hindu-Christian clashes in Uttar Pradesh in over 6 years. The Government dispatched the NCM to investigate the attacks in the north, but the NCM's findings that the attacks were not "communal in nature" sparked widespread criticism in the minority community (see Section II). There is strong evidence that the NCM report misrepresented the victims in its claims that they themselves are entirely satisfied that there was no religious motivation behind the violence. Victims of the incidents claim that the local police were not responsive either before or during the attacks. No arrests were made as of mid-2000. Christian groups in the north believe that these incidents were religiously motivated. Religious minorities in the north claim that they have seen a deterioration in the Government's attitude toward the minority community since the BJP assumed power in 1998, and they are concerned that attacks on religious minorities no longer appear to be confined to Gujarat and Orissa.

On June 26, 2000 the National Human Rights Commission ordered affected states to provide written reports detailing the violence against Christians and the actions taken by state governments.

*Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Jammu and Kashmir, the country's only Muslim majority state, has been the focus of repeated armed conflict between India and Pakistan, and internally between security forces and Muslim militants who demand that the state be given independence or be ceded to Pakistan. Particularly since an organized insurgency erupted in Jammu and Kashmir in 1989, there have been numerous reports of human rights abuses carried out by the security forces and local officials against the Muslim population, including execution-style killings, beatings, and other forms of physical abuse. Many of the charges of government responsibility for massacres of civilians lack credibility; however, significant evidence emerged in August 1999 about the Government's earlier role in the killing of 19 Muslims in Saalan village of Poonch district on August 4, 1998. An investigation by the chief minister revealed that the state and federal governments had created an overall infrastructure that specifically included individuals with the demonstrated capacity and attitude to commit such acts of violence. It is not clear to what extent the actions of the Government and security forces were based on religion.

In Uttar Pradesh on June 10, 2000, Vijay Ekka, a witness to the killing of Catholic priest Brother George Kuzhikandum, died in police custody. Ekka initially was placed under police protection because it was believed that there was a risk of reprisals against him by members of the Hindu community. His death drew serious criticism from human rights organizations and minority communities nationwide. Archbishop Vincent Concessao of Agra said Ekka's body showed signs of torture, and said police had told church authorities that Ekka had committed suicide. While in detention, Ekka told visitors that he was being tortured constantly in police custody, and said he was afraid police would kill him. The state government initiated an investigation into Ekka's death on June 17, 2000, and a few days later announced plans to establish a judicial inquiry. The Mathura superintendent of police was transferred and two policemen were arrested in connection with the incident.

Nationwide there was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Although the law provides for religious freedom, enforcement of the law has been poor, particularly at the state and local levels, where the failure to deal adequately with intragroup and intergroup conflict and with local disturbances has abridged the right to religious freedom. Some Hindu groups continued to attack Christians during the period covered by this report. In many cases, the Government's response consisted largely of statements criticizing the violence against Christians, with few efforts to hold accountable those persons responsible or to prevent such incidents from occurring (see Section—II). A federal political system in which state governments hold jurisdiction over law and order problems contributed to the Government's ineffectiveness in dealing with the problem. India's only national law enforcement agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation, is required to ask state government permission before investigating a crime in the affected state. Without such jurisdiction, the Government generally has described the violence and attacks as a series of isolated local phenomena, in some states calling for a national debate on conversions, which Hindus had advocated being banned.

*Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

During the period covered by this report, attacks on religious minorities occurred in several states.

India's caste system generates severe tensions due to disparities in social status, economic opportunity, and, occasionally, labor rights. These tensions frequently have led to, or exacerbated, violent confrontations and human rights abuses. However, for the most part intercaste violence does not have a significant religious component.

The country's caste system historically has strong ties to Hinduism. It delineates clear social strata, assigning highly structured religious, cultural, social roles, privileges, and restrictions to each caste and subcaste. Members of each caste and frequently each subcaste—are expected to fulfill a specific set of duties (known as dharma) in order to secure elevation to a higher caste through rebirth. Dalits are viewed by many Hindus as separate from or "below" the caste system; nonetheless, they too are expected to follow their dharma if they hope to achieve caste in a future life. Despite efforts by modern leaders from Mahatma Gandhi's time forward to eliminate the discriminatory aspects of caste, societal, political, and economic pres-

tures continue to ensure its widespread practice (see Section I). Caste today therefore is as much a cultural and social phenomenon as a religious one.

The Constitution gives the President the authority to specify historically disadvantaged castes, Dalits, and "tribals" (members of indigenous groups historically outside the caste system). These "scheduled" castes, Dalits, and tribes are entitled to affirmative action and hiring quotas in employment, benefits from special development funds, and special training programs. The impact of reservations and quotas on society and on the groups they are designed to benefit is a subject of active debate within the country. Some contend that they have achieved the desired effect and should be modified, while others strongly argue that they should be continued, as the system has not addressed adequately the long-term discriminatory impact of caste. According to the 1991 census, scheduled castes, including Dalits, made up 16 percent and scheduled tribes 8 percent of the country's 1991 population of 846 million.

Christians historically have rejected the concept of caste, despite the fact that Christians descended from low caste Hindu families continue to suffer the same social and economic limitations that low caste Hindus do. Low caste Hindus who convert to Christianity lose their eligibility for affirmative action programs. Those who become Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs do not, as the Constitution groups members of those faiths with Hindus and specifies that the Constitution shall not affect "the operation of any existing law or prevent the state from making any law providing for social welfare and reform" of these groups. In some states, there are government jobs reserved for Muslims of low caste descent.

In the past, Hindu-Muslim violence has led to killings and a cycle of retaliation. In some instances, local police and government officials abetted the violence, and at times security forces were responsible for abuses. Excluding incidents in Kashmir, there was a decline in the number of incidents of Hindu-Muslim violence during the period covered by this report. On August 26, 1999, a mob of approximately 15 persons mutilated and burned to death a Muslim cattle trader in Padiabada village, Orissa. According to press reports, men with bows and arrows and axes attacked the cattle trader. He was thrown into his shop, which had been set ablaze. On January 30, 2000, Muslim and Hindu crowds clashed and threw stones at each other in Bangalore after an idol was desecrated in a Hindu temple. No one was killed, but the police quickly banned public assemblies of more than three persons (the ban since has been lifted).

Hindus and Muslims continue to feud over the existence of mosques constructed several centuries ago on three sites where Hindus believe that temples stood previously. The potential for renewed Hindu-Muslim violence remains considerable. On July 20, 1999, violence erupted between Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, and one person died. The violence began when a band of Hindu youths set fire to Muslim shops and vehicles after encountering some Muslim youths teasing a mentally disabled woman in the Muslim-dominated old city. Police responded by declaring an area-wide curfew, thereby bringing the rioting under control; however, there was renewed communal violence on July 22, 1999, when the curfew was lifted.

Attacks by Muslim separatists seeking to end Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir, and continued political violence, drove most Hindus in the Kashmir Valley (Pandits) to seek refuge in camps in Jammu, with relatives in New Delhi, or elsewhere. Throughout the period covered by this report, militants carried out several execution-style mass killings of Hindu villagers and violently targeted Pandits for violence in Jammu and Kashmir. For example, it is believed that on July 1, 1999, a group of Muslims killed nine members of two Hindu families, including three women and a child, in Poonch district, Jammu and Kashmir. The Pandit community fears that a negotiated solution giving greater autonomy to the Muslim majority might threaten its own survival in Jammu and Kashmir as a culturally and historically distinctive group.

On March 20, 2000, 17 unidentified gunmen in army uniforms killed 35 Sikh men in the village of Chatti Singhpora (near Anantnag in south Kashmir). The incident was the largest single massacre of civilians during the past 11 years of militancy and the only mass killing in Kashmir to have involved the Sikh community. The evidence suggests that Muslim separatists dressed in army uniforms carried out the killings. No arrests have been reported. The massacre of Sikhs was preceded by several massacres of Hindus in the area. During the early morning hours of July 20, 1999, approximately 20 persons entered two houses in the Doda district of Jammu region and used automatic weapons to kill 15 persons, including 3 women and 7 children. The group, identified by a survivor as belonging to Hizbul-Mujahideen, were targeting specifically five men in the house who were members of their local village defense committee. Also on July 20, 1999, in the Poonch district of Jammu region, militants killed four members of a government road engineering group. The

four victims were all non-Muslims from outside Jammu and Kashmir. The July 20, 1999, massacres were the fourth in a series of incidents during the summer of 1999.

The period covered by this report was preceded in 1998 and early 1999 by a serious outbreak of societal violence against Christians, apparently sparked by rumors of "forced conversions" of Hindus to Christianity. In Orissa, Dara Singh (a member of the Hindu extremist Bajrang Dal) was arrested on January 31, 2000 for murdering Graham Staines and his two young sons in January 1999. He also was charged with the killings of another Christian and a Muslim. Singh remains a popular figure among Hindu extremists, many of whom apparently helped him evade arrest for over a year. Several of Singh's associates also have been arrested and charged. The Wadhwa Commission established to probe into the Staines murder presented its findings in August 1999, confirming that Dara Singh masterminded the killing but it effectively exonerating Hindu organizations and political parties that had been accused of complicity. Some Christian groups criticized the Commission's findings as a coverup.

Between March and November 1999, in the wake of the Staines murder, five families in Orissa's tribal belt that previously had embraced Christianity reportedly reconverted to Hinduism. On June 2, 2000, a Hindu priest reportedly reconverted 72 tribal Christians in the same village where Graham Staines and his sons were killed. In West Bengal in February 2000, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) reportedly reconverted 245 tribals, mostly Christians, in Birbhum district to Hinduism. According to the VHP's chief organizer in West Bengal, Asit Bhattacharya, 42 tribal Christians were reconverted in 1999 in Malda district and 280 Muslims in Murshidabad. He said that the state government would not stop reconversions of non-Hindus who were willing to return to the Hindu fold. In Arunachal Pradesh, alleged pressure from Hindus to reconvert tribals back to Hinduism has led to increased tension between Hindus and Christians. Members of Hindu organizations (including members of the Hindu Jagran Manch, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and the Bajrang Dal) are concerned about Christians' efforts to convert Hindus. They claimed that Hindus, including economically disadvantaged Dalits and tribals, were being forced or induced to convert by Christian missionaries; in some cases, Hindus allegedly have reconverted, at times by force or threat of force, tribals and Dalits belonging to other religions. However, many tribals follow traditional religious practices, and many Christian tribals were not Hindu prior to becoming Christian, even though they often are counted by the Government and others as Hindu. On September 6, 1999, Vishwa Hindu Parishad working president Ashok Singhal called for enactment of a law banning forced conversions.

Christian missionaries have been operating schools and medical clinics for many years in tribal areas. Tribals and Dalits are outside of the caste system and occupy the very lowest position in the social hierarchy. However, they have made socioeconomic gains as a result of the missionary schools and other institutions, which, among other things, have increased literacy among the lowest castes. Some higher caste Hindus tend to resent these gains. Some fault the missionaries for the resulting disturbance in the traditional Hindu social order as better educated Dalits, tribals, and members of the lower castes no longer accept their disadvantaged status as readily as they once did.

During the period covered by this report, there were fewer but more geographically widespread incidents of anti-Christian violence. There were attacks against Christian communities and Christian missionaries by Hindu groups in many areas, including some that previously had not seen such violence. These attacks, primarily in the form of mob violence, included the destruction of churches and religious property, as well as violent attacks on Christian pilgrims and leaders. From July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000, incidents of violence against Christians were reported in Tamil Nadu, Goa, Punjab, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. For example, on September 2, 1999, Father Arul Doss, a 35-year-old Roman Catholic priest, was killed in a night raid by Dara Singh-led Hindu groups on a church in Jambani village in Orissa's Mayurbhanj district. Doss was pulled from the church, shot with arrows, and beaten to death by his assailants. The mob also severely beat Doss's associate and vandalized the one-room church, before setting it on fire. In a public statement the same day, Prime Minister Vajpayee strongly criticized Father Doss's murder and called for its perpetrators to be brought to justice. On September 20, 1999, in Chapra, Bihar, two young men attacked a Roman Catholic nun; they reportedly questioned her about the number of conversions she and other nuns had made at Jalalpur convent. The men reportedly stripped the nun, forced her to drink urine, and attempted to rape her. Bihar Police Chief K.A. Jacob visited the scene of the crime 3 days later, and the state government established a three-member committee



to investigate the crime. There were no reports of progress in the investigation of this case.

On November 11, 1999, a group of about 40 persons attacked a Christian gathering outside a church in the Khyala area of Delhi, in the first such incident in the capital. At least 12 persons were injured in the attack, when the group descended on an open-air Bible reading session, allegedly tearing pamphlets and damaging two Bibles. A police spokesman said the group "may have had some BJP activists" and four persons that are suspected of instigating the attacks were being sought.

There was a series of incidents in Uttar Pradesh in April 2000. On April 6, 2000, an angry group, demanding a decrease in school fees and an increase in the number of passing students, harassed the principal of Sacred Heart School in Mathura. The principal disputed an allegation that the harassment was because of school fees, saying she was harassed and chased by a group of young men (not parents of students) who also asked her questions relating to what religious texts were read at the school. On April 10, 2000, Father Joseph Dabre, principal of St. Dominic's School in Mathura, was beaten by six young men who went to the school on the pretext of a question about admissions. On April 11, 2000, in Kosi Kalan near Mathura, 8 to 10 assailants attacked Father K. K. Thomas at St. Theresa's school when he rushed to the assistance of a servant girl and 3 nuns whom the assailants were attacking. The culprits also stole equipment and cash. Thomas was beaten unconscious and left for dead by his attackers, who were not found.

Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee asked for a detailed report on the incidents in the Mathura area from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Ram Prakash Gupta. State officials also ordered police to keep watch over churches, missionary centers, and other places of worship after the attacks near Mathura. On April 26, 2000, the NCM visited the sites of these attacks at Sacred Heart School, St. Dominic's School, and St. Theresa's School, and issued a report on April 27, 2000. The report, which claimed that the Sacred Heart case had "no communal tinge," and that the Kosi Kalan case was a "case of robbery and nothing else," was criticized widely by the minority community. The validity of the report was questioned openly by several members of the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament), and victims of the attacks claimed that they were misquoted in the report. These attacks on Christians in Uttar Pradesh were the first in the state in 6 years.

Following the violence in April 2000 in the vicinity of Mathura, on June 7, 2000, a Catholic priest, Brother George Kuzhikandum, was killed on the campus of Brother Polus Memorial School near Mathura. On June 10, 2000, Vijay Ekka, a witness to the killing of Brother George, died in police custody (see Section I).

In northern Punjab state, in June 2000, the Rev. Ashish Prabash Masih, age 23, reportedly was murdered and his body burned. While police ruled out any communal undertones, the Punjab Christian Association stated that the murder was part of a concerted campaign against its community by Hindu nationalists.

In April 2000, three nuns said that they were run down deliberately by a motor scooter in the northern Indian state of Haryana on their way to a midnight Easter Mass. One of the nuns was injured seriously. The Christian Forum stated that the attack was the fifth on nuns and priests in Haryana in the year, but both the National Commission for Minorities and the Catholic Bishop's Conference stated that the incident could have been an accident.

On May 9, 2000, in Maharashtra, approximately 150 suspected activists of the Bajrang Dal and the VHP attacked the 45th annual convention of the Evangelical Alliance Christian Church and the Nashik District Church Council, set fire to three vehicles, and ransacked a bus carrying religious literature. Four persons were hospitalized. Rural police said that they arrested 33 persons, all of whom belonged to Bajrang Dal or VHP. Although political leaders from Maharashtra's ruling party denounced the attack, the minister of state for dairy development created a stir when he joined a group of BJP, RSS, and VHP activists who went to meet and congratulate the accused when they were released from jail on bail.

On May 12, 2000 in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, assailants threw stones and tried to set fire to one church, while vandalizing two other churches.

In November 1999, in Anekal, a small village in Karnataka, a group of Hindus allegedly attacked Selva Kumar, a Catholic seminary student, and stabbed him in the neck. The attackers accused him of trying to convert Dalits to Christianity. In November 1999, a group of Hindu and Muslim students from St. Joseph's Evening College in Bangalore, Karnataka, was attacked by suspected Hindu members who accused them of converting villagers in Anekal.

Tamil Nadu was the scene of multiple church burnings between September 30 and November 12, 1999. During this 6-week period, nine thatched-roof buildings used for worship services by the Church of South India (a member of the Anglican Communion), the Syrian Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Seventh-Day

Adventist Church, the International Evangelist Church, and various Pentecostal denominations were burned down; no one was killed. Police arrested a few individuals in connection with the fires, but the disposition of these cases is not known.

The burning of churches continued in the first half of 2000. For example, on May 12, 2000, a hut used as a prayer cottage by Christians in Katiguda village was burned by what the local police referred to as "anti-socials." On May 16, 2000, a cottage in Dharakote village used as a place of congregation for local Christians was set on fire. Armed police officers were deployed in the area, but no arrests thus far have been made.

On June 8, 2000, bombs exploded in four churches in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Goa. The blasts occurred in a Baptist church in Ongole, Andhra Pradesh; a Catholic church in Tadepalligudem, Andhra Pradesh; a Catholic church in Wadi, Karnataka; and a church in Vasco, Goa. The bombs reportedly blew out windows and damaged pews; three persons in Ongole and two in Wadi received minor injuries. During the last week of June 2000, a mosque in Gunter, Andhra Pradesh was bombed. None of the localities had a history of serious communal tensions before the blasts. In Karnataka police patrols reportedly were increased at all places of worship, and a special investigative unit was formed to investigate the bombings. By June 20, 2000, nine persons reportedly were arrested in connection with the blasts in Andhra Pradesh, including a leading member of a Shi'a Muslim organization. On May 5, 2000, six missionaries who were distributing Bibles and other literature in Vivekanandnagar, Ahmedabad, suffered a severe beating. Some evangelists and some Bajrang Dal activists came to blows in this locality when the Bajrang Dal activists forbade distribution of Christian literature. Both the groups filed complaints against each other in the police station about being beaten up. A Hindu bystander who tried to intervene had his finger chopped off, according to newspaper reports. On May 22, 2000, 30 persons were injured when a powerful bomb exploded during a Christian meeting at Machlipatnam in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

Referring to the rash of attacks against Christians over the first 6 months of 2000, the National Human Rights Commission expressed its concern at the upsurge of violence faced by Christians, and demanded that the Government announce the steps that it was taking to protect the Christian community.

Other incidents affecting religious minorities during the period covered by this report occurred in Tripura, where Christian militants have imposed bans on Hindu and Muslim festivals, and in Assam, where Hindu concern over the continued influx of illegal Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh has grown over the past year.

The practice of dedicating or marrying young, prepubescent girls to a Hindu deity or temple as "servants of god" or "Devadasis," is reported by Human Rights Watch to continue in several southern states, including Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Devadasis, who generally are Dalits, may not marry. They are taken from their families and are required to provide sexual services to priests and high caste Hindus. Reportedly, many eventually are sold to urban brothels. In 1992 the state of Karnataka passed the Karnataka Devadasi (Prohibition) Act and called for the rehabilitation of Devadasis, but this law reportedly is not enforced effectively and criminalizes the actions of Devadasis. Since Devadasis are by custom required to be sexually available to higher caste men, it reportedly is difficult for them to obtain justice from the legal system if they are raped by anyone.

Despite the incidents of violence and discrimination during the period covered by this report, relations between various religious groups generally are amicable among the substantial majority of citizens. There are efforts at ecumenical understanding that bring religious leaders together to defuse religious tensions. The annual Sarva Dharma Sammelan (All Religious Convention) and Mushairas (Hindu-Urdu poetry sessions) held on many occasions are some events that help bring the various communities together. The holidays of Eid Milan, Holi Mila, and Iftar are occasions for Hindus and Muslims to celebrate at parties together, and are important social events that promote communal harmony. After episodes of violence against Christians, Muslim groups have protested against the treatment of Christians by Hindu extremists. Hundreds of nonChristians joined Christians in the streets of New Delhi in June 2000 to mourn the sudden loss of Archbishop Alan de Lastic after his death in a car accident in Europe.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Mission continued to promote religious freedom through contact with the country's senior leadership, as well as with state and local officials. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates regularly report on events and trends that affect religious freedom.

During his state visit to India, President Clinton spoke about the massacre of Sikhs in Kashmir on March 20, 2000, and called for an end to the violence. In August and September 1999, the U.S. Consul in Chennai expressed concern about the status of Father Ceresko's visa application to the chief secretary of Karnataka and regarding the cancellation of the conference of the Anglican Church (see Section I) to Kerala state government officials. In January 2000, Senator Tom Daschle's delegation raised the issue of religious minorities with Home Minister L.K. Advani during a visit to New Delhi. In February 2000, a representative of the State Department discussed minorities issues with the National Human Rights Commission in New Delhi. On June 23, 2000 the U.S. Ambassador noted to the press that attacks against Christians are a serious concern.

Embassy officials meet with religious officials to monitor religious freedom on a regular basis. U.S. Mission officers traveled to Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh during the period covered by this report to assess the situation of religious minorities in those states. Embassy and consulate officials also engaged with important leaders of all minority communities. The U.S. mission maintains contacts with U.S. residents, including those in the NGO and missionary communities. The NGO community in the country is extremely active with regard to religious freedom, and mission officers meet with local NGO's to keep apprised of developments concerning religious freedom.

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## MALDIVES

Freedom of religion is restricted significantly. The 1997 Constitution designates Islam as the official state religion and the practice of other religions is prohibited by law.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The President is the "supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam." The Government observes Shari'a (Islamic law), and in 1998 expelled 24 foreigners suspected of proselytizing non-Islamic faiths. Citizens regard Islam as one of their society's most distinctive characteristics and believe that it promotes harmony and national identity.

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident Embassy in the Maldives; the U.S. Ambassador in Colombo, Sri Lanka is also accredited to the Government in Male. The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Freedom of religion is restricted significantly. The 1997 Constitution designates Islam as the official state religion, and the Government interprets this provision to impose a requirement that citizens be Muslims. The practice of any religion other than Islam is prohibited by law. However, foreign residents are allowed to practice their religion if they do so privately.

#### *Religious Demography*

It is believed that the entire indigenous population is Muslim and is overwhelmingly Sunni. Foreigners in the Maldives—more than 300,000 tourists annually (predominantly Europeans and Japanese) and about 20,000 foreign workers (predominantly Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indian, and Bangladeshi)—are allowed to practice their religion if they do so in private and do not encourage citizens to participate.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government has established a Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs to provide guidance on religious matters. The Government also has set standards for individuals who conduct Friday services at mosques to ensure adequate theological qualifications.

The President must be a Sunni Muslim and under the Constitution is the "supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam." Cabinet ministers also are required to be Sunni Muslims. Members of the People's Majlis (Parliament) must be Muslim. The Government observes Shari'a (Islamic law).

There are no places of worship for adherents of other religions. The Government prohibits the importation of icons and religious statues but generally permits the importation of religious tracts, such as Bibles, for personal use.

The Government prohibits non-Muslim clergy and missionaries from proselytizing and conducting public worship services. Conversion of a Muslim to another faith is a violation of Shari'a and may result in a loss of the convert's citizenship.

Islamic instruction is a mandatory part of the school curriculum, and the Government funds the salaries of instructors of Islam.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The law can limit a citizen's right to freedom of expression in order to protect "the basic tenets of Islam."

In April 1998, the Government asked the Seychelles Government to stop the radio broadcast of Christian programming in the local language, Dhivehi. However, the broadcasts continue, albeit irregularly.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners during the period covered by this report.

Government officials appear to be as concerned about extremes in Muslim religious beliefs as they are about other religions; the law used to expel 24 foreign nationals accused of proselytizing during June 1998 originally was enacted to restrict the influence of Islamic fundamentalists.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

#### *Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Most citizens regard Islam as one of their society's most distinctive characteristics and believe that it promotes harmony and national identity.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident Embassy in the Maldives; the U.S. Ambassador in Colombo, Sri Lanka is also accredited to the Government in Male. The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## NEPAL

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and permits the practice of all religions; however, although the Government generally has not interfered with the practice of other religions, conversion and proselytizing are prohibited, and members of minority religions occasionally complain of police harassment. The Constitution describes Nepal as a "Hindu Kingdom," although it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Adherents of the country's many religions generally coexist peacefully and respect all places of worship. Those who convert to other religions may face isolated incidents of violence and sometimes are ostracized socially, but generally do not fear to admit in public their affiliations.

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Ba'hai and other religious groups. It closely monitors religious freedoms and raises these issues with the Government when appropriate.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and permits the practice of all religions; however, although the Government generally has not interfered with the practice of other religions, conversion and proselytizing are prohibited and punishable with fines or imprisonment, and members of minority religions occasionally complain of police harassment. Some Christian groups are concerned that the ban on proselytizing limits the expression of nonHindu religious belief. The Constitution describes Nepal as a "Hindu Kingdom," although it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion.

*Religious Demography*

Hindus constitute 85 to 90 percent of the population; Buddhists, 5 to 10 percent; Muslims, 2 to 5 percent; and Christians, approximately 1.7 percent. Christian denominations are few but growing. Recent estimates put the number of Christians in Nepal at about 400,000, and press reports indicate that 170 Christian churches operate in Kathmandu alone.

*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

A conviction for conversion or proselytizing can result in fines or imprisonment or, in the case of foreigners, expulsion from the country. However, arrests or detentions for proselytizing are rare, and there have been few incidents of punishment or investigation in connection with conversion or proselytization during the last few years.

April 2000 public observances of Easter in a Kathmandu park and Passover seder in a major hotel in Kathmandu were uneventful. However, a year earlier, Christian groups in Kathmandu were prevented from observing Good Friday in a public park when they failed to obtain the proper permit; 3 members of a group of 400 persons reportedly were injured when police attempted to disperse the group's subsequent protest at a local government office. Easter services that year, which did have the proper permit, took place in a public park without incident.

The Government investigates reports of proselytizing. It investigated a 1997 accusation against the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and cleared ADRA in 1997. Nongovernmental groups or individuals are free to file charges of proselytizing against individuals or organizations. Such a case was filed with the Supreme Court against ADRA and the United Missions to Nepal, an umbrella Protestant group, on December 31, 1999. The case still is pending. In 1999 a U.S. medical doctor was deported; he believed that it was because of an allegation that he had proselytized Christianity.

For decades dozens of Christian missionary hospitals, welfare organizations, and schools have operated in the country. These organizations have not proselytized and have operated freely. Missionary schools are among the most respected institutions of secondary education in the country; most of the country's governing and business elite graduated from Jesuit high schools. Many foreign Christian organizations have direct ties to Nepali churches and sponsor Nepali priests for religious training abroad.

The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste, except for traditional religious practices at Hindu temples, where, for example, members of the lowest caste are not permitted.

The Press and Publications Act prohibits the publication of materials that create animosity among persons of different castes or religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

*Forced Religious Conversions of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The adherents of the country's many religions generally coexist peacefully and respect all places of worship. Most Hindus respect the many Buddhist shrines located throughout the country; Buddhists accord Hindu shrines the same respect. Buddha's birthplace is an important pilgrimage site and Buddha's birthday is a national holiday. The country's Muslim minority is not well integrated with the larger Hindu majority, and does not have the same level of common religious feeling that the Hindu and Buddhist communities share.

Some Christian groups report that Hindu extremism has increased in recent years. In January 1999, the Indiabased Hindu political party Shiv Sena, locally known as Pashupati Sena, opened an office in Kathmandu; a few Shiv Sena candidates unsuccessfully ran for office in the 1999 general elections. Government policy does not support Hindu extremism, although some political figures have made public statements critical of Christian missionary activities. Some citizens are wary of proselytizing and conversion by Christians and therefore, view the growth of Christianity with alarm.

Those who chose to convert to other religions—in particular Hindu citizens who convert to Islam or Christianity—sometimes are ostracized socially. Some reportedly

have been forced to leave their villages. While this prejudice is not systematic, it can be vehement and occasionally violent. Hindus who convert to another religion may face isolated incidents of hostility or discrimination from Hindu extremist groups. Nevertheless, converts generally do not fear to admit in public their new religious affiliations.

The caste system strongly influences society, even though it is prohibited by the Constitution. However, traditional religious practices at Hindu temples are an exception to this prohibition. The Government allows caste discrimination at Hindu temples where, for example, members of the lowest caste are not permitted (see Section I). Otherwise, the Government makes an effort to protect the rights of the disadvantaged castes.

In August 1999, a mentally deranged man desecrated a Hindu temple in southern Nepal, declaring that he was a Christian and that "God told me to do it." Local Christians released a statement indicating that the man was not a member of any known church. However, in apparent retaliation and after reports of agitation for revenge, a nearby Christian church was desecrated and set afire the following week. The senior local government official said that, although some Hindu-oriented groups had formed a committee to retaliate against Christians, it was not clear whether any particular institution or group was involved in the church burning.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Ba'hai and other religious groups. The Embassy closely monitors religious freedoms and raises these issues with the Government when appropriate.

## PAKISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, the Government imposes a range of limits on freedom of religion. Pakistan is an Islamic republic; Islam is the state religion. Islam also is a core element of Pakistan's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims. Religious freedom is "subject to law, public order, and morality;" accordingly, actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophet, for example, are not protected. Further, the Constitution requires that laws be consistent with Islam and imposes some elements of Koranic law on both Muslims and religious minorities.

There were some slight improvements in the Government's treatment of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. For example, the Government of Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf, which took power in a military coup on October 12, 1999, abandoned his predecessor's proposal to impose Shari'a law through a constitutional amendment. Many religious minorities feared that the implementation of Shari'a law through a constitutional amendment would increase their vulnerability. According to persons in religious minority communities, Musharraf made efforts to seek minority input into decision-making and offered cabinet positions to individuals from minority communities.

The Government fails in many respects to protect the rights of minorities. This is due both to public policy and to government unwillingness to take action against societal forces hostile to those who practice a different faith. Specific government policies that discriminate against religious minorities include: the use of "Hudood" Ordinances, which apply different standards of evidence to Muslims and non-Muslims and to men and women in alleged violations of Islamic law; certain legal prohibitions against Ahmadis freely practicing their faith; "blasphemy" laws, which often are misused to target minorities; and separate political electorates for minorities under the (currently suspended) Constitution. In April 2000, Musharraf announced a proposal to make an administrative change to the blasphemy laws, which was aimed at reducing the number of persons who are accused wrongly under the laws; however, Musharraf failed to implement these proposed changes due to significant opposition and pressure from some religious groups.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country and proselytizing (except by Ahmadis) is allowed; however, proselytizing is considered socially inappropriate among Muslims and missionaries face some problems due to this perception.

Discriminatory religious legislation adds to an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which contributes to acts of violence directed against Muslim groups, as well as against Christians, Hindus, and members of Muslim offshoot sects such as Ahmadis and Zikris. The Government does not encourage sectarian violence; however, there

were instances in which the Government failed to intervene in cases of societal violence directed at minority religious groups. The lack of an adequate government response contributed to an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence and intimidation committed against religious minorities. Parties and groups with religious affiliations target minority groups.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officials and visitors have raised issues such as the blasphemy laws with Government of Pakistan interlocutors on a number of occasions. The U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom visited the country in February 2000.

#### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. Pakistan is an Islamic republic, and Islam is the state religion, as established in the Constitution. Islam also is a core element of the country's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims. Under the Constitution (which was suspended following the October 12, 1999 coup), both the President and the Prime Minister must be Muslims, and all senior officials must swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology." A number of other provisions of the Constitution also limit certain fundamental rights based on Islamic principles. For example, freedom of speech is provided for; however, this right is subject to "reasonable restrictions" that can be imposed "in the interest of the glory of Islam." Actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophet are not protected. Further, the Constitution requires that laws be consistent with Islam and imposes some elements of Koranic law on both Muslims and religious minorities. The Government does not ban formally the practice of the Ahmadi religion, but the practice of the Ahmadi faith is restricted severely by law. For example, Ahmadis, who consider themselves Muslims, face persecution under the blasphemy laws if they refer to themselves as such.

The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions, which reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The federal Shari'at court and the Shari'a bench of the Supreme Court serve as appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinances, and judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslims. The federal Shari'at court also may overturn any legislation judged to be inconsistent with the tenets of Islam.

##### *Religious Demography*

According to the 1981 census (latest available figures), an estimated 95 percent of the population are Muslim; 1.56 percent are Christian; 1.51 percent are Hindu; and 0.26 percent are "other" (Ahmadis are included in the latter category). The majority of Muslims in the country are Sunni. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the Muslim population are Shi'a, and it is estimated that there are 550,000 to 600,000 Ismailis (a recognized Shi'a Muslim group). Most or all Ismailis in the country are followers of the Aga Khan. The Government conducted a census in 1998; however, the updated information is not yet available.

Religious minority groups believe that they are underrepresented in government census counts. Official and private estimates of their numbers can differ significantly. Current population estimates place the number of Christians at 3 million and the number of Ahmadis at 3 to 4 million. Current estimates for the remaining communities are less contested and place the total number of Hindus at 2.8 million; Parsis (Zoroastrians), Buddhists, and Sikhs at as high as 20,000 each; and Baha'is at 12,000. The "other" category also includes a few tribes whose members practice traditional indigenous religions and who normally do not declare themselves, and those who do not wish to practice any religion but remain silent about the fact. Social pressure is such that few persons would admit to being unaffiliated with any religion.

While Christianity frequently is seen as a foreign "Westernized" religion, it has a long history in the country. Some Christian communities trace their roots to the time of St. Thomas the Apostle. Most trace their origin to mid-19th century missionary movements in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Many Christians, in particular the recent converts, generally are in the poorest socioeconomic groups. There are several long-established Baptist churches and, in Karachi, perhaps a dozen storefront Pentacostal and other evangelical churches. The largest Christian mission group operating in Sindh and Baluchistan does Bible

translation for the Church of Pakistan, mostly in tribal areas. An Anglican missionary group fields several missionaries to assist the Church of Pakistan (a united church of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans) in administrative and educational work. Roman Catholic missionaries, mostly Franciscan, work with the disabled.

Punjab is the largest province in the country in terms of population. The Muslims are the largest religious group in Punjab, as is true for the country as a whole. Although Christians can be found throughout the country, approximately 98 percent of Christians reside in Punjab, making them the largest religious minority in the province. Approximately 60 percent of Punjab's Christians live in villages. The largest group of Christians belongs to the Church of Pakistan; the second largest group belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The rest are from different evangelical and church organizations.

Sindh and Baluchistan provinces also are overwhelmingly Muslim, with a population that is approximately 97 percent Muslim. Slightly over 1 percent of the population in these provinces are estimated to be Christian, and slightly over 1 percent are estimated to be Hindu. The two provinces also have a few tribes that practice traditional indigenous religions and a small population of Parsis (approximately 7,000 persons). The Ismailis are concentrated in Karachi and the northern areas. The tiny but influential Parsi community is concentrated in Karachi, although some live in Islamabad and Peshawar. According to local Christian sources, between 70,000 and 100,000 Christians and a few thousand Hindus live in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Christians constitute about 2 percent of Karachi's population. The Roman Catholic diocese of Karachi estimates that there are 120,000 Catholics in Karachi, 40,000 in the rest of Sindh, and 5,000 in Quetta, Baluchistan. Evangelical Christians have converted a few tribal Hindus of the lower castes from interior Sindh. Hindus are concentrated in Sindh and constitute 1 to 2 percent of the province's population. An estimated 100,000 Hindus live in Karachi. Ahmadis are concentrated in Punjab and in Sindh.

No data are available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals (as opposed to mere membership). However, because religion is tied closely to a person's ethnic, social, and economic identity, there is less room for nominal, secular passivity with regard to religion. Most Muslim men offer prayers at least once a week at Friday prayers, and the vast majority of Muslim men and women pray at home or at the workplace during one or more of the five daily times of prayer. During the month of Ramadan, even many of the otherwise less observant Muslims fast and attend mosque services more faithfully. About 70 percent of English-speaking Roman Catholics worship regularly; a much lower percentage of Urdu speakers do so.

Many Muslims consult Pirs (hereditary saints) or saints' shrines, where pre-Islamic practices are common. As many as 25 percent of Muslims regularly consult such Pirs, and up to 50 percent may seek their help in times of crisis.

The Shikaris (a hunting caste now mostly employed as trash collectors in urban Sindh) are converts to Islam, but eat foods forbidden by Islam. Other Muslims generally ostracize the Shikaris, primarily because of their eating habits.

Many varieties of Hinduism are practiced; the type practiced usually depends upon location and caste. Hindus have retained or absorbed many ancient traditional practices of Sindh. Hindu shrines are scattered throughout the country. Approximately 1,500 Hindu temples and shrines exist in Sindh and about 500 in Baluchistan. Most of the shrines and temples are tiny, no more than wayside shrines. During Hindu festivals, such as Divali and Holi, congregational attendance is much greater.

The Sikh community regularly holds ceremonial gatherings at sacred places in the Punjab. Prominent places of Sikh pilgrimage include Nanakana Sahib (where the founder of the Sikh religion Guru Nanak was born), Hasan Abdal (a shrine where an imprint of his hand is kept), and Andkarta Poora or Daira Baba Nanak Sahib in Sialkot District (where Guru Nanak is buried).

Parsis, who practice the Zoroastrian religion, have no regularly scheduled congregational services, except for a 10-day festival in August during which they celebrate the New Year and pray for the dead. All Parsis are expected to attend these services; most reportedly do. During the rest of the year, individuals offer prayers at Parsi temples. Parsis maintain a conscious creedal and ceremonial separation from other religions, preserving ancient rites and forbidding marriage to members of other religions. The Parsi community is self-sufficient in religious leaders, and there are no known Parsi missionaries operating in the country.

Only one group described by the authorities as a "foreign cult" reportedly has been established in the country. In Karachi members of the U.S.-based "Children of God" are rumored to be operating a commune where they practice polygamy.



*Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policies do not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority faiths. For example, all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation, are subject to certain provisions of Islamic law. In the Malakand division and the Kohistan district of the NWFP, ordinances require that “all cases, suits, inquiries, matters, and proceedings in the courts shall be decided in accordance with Shari’a.” These ordinances define Shari’a as the injunctions found in both the Koran and the Sunna. Islamic law judges with the assistance of the Ulema (Islamic scholars), under the general supervision of the Peshawar High Court, try all court cases in the Malakand Division and the Kohistan District. Elsewhere in the country, partial provisions of Shari’a apply. In 1998 then-Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, proposed an amendment to the Constitution (the 15th Amendment) that would have imposed Shari’a throughout the country; minority religious groups feared that the implementation of this amendment would have restricted further the freedom to practice religions other than Islam. However, the Musharraf Government did not enact the proposed 15th Amendment.

The Government does not ban formally the public practice of the Ahmadi religion, but the practice of the Ahmadi faith is restricted severely by law. A 1974 Constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis to be a non-Muslim minority because, according to the Government, they do not accept Mohammed as the last Prophet of Islam. However, Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims and observe Islamic practices. In 1984 the Government inserted Section 298(c) into the Penal Code, prohibiting Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslim or posing as Muslims; from referring to their faith as Islam; from preaching or propagating their faith; from inviting others to accept the Ahmadi faith; and from insulting the religious feelings of Muslims. This section of the Penal Code has caused problems for Ahmadis, particularly the provision that forbids them from “directly or indirectly” posing as Muslims. Armed with this vague wording, mainstream Muslim religious leaders have brought charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting form and for naming their children Mohammed. The constitutionality of Section 286 (c) was upheld in a split-decision Supreme Court case in 1996. The punishment for violation of this section is imprisonment for up to 3 years and a fine. This provision has been used extensively by the Government and anti-Ahmadi religious groups to harass and to persecute Ahmadis. Ahmadis also are prohibited from holding any conferences or gatherings.

There are a variety of other legal restrictions on the right to freedom of religion, and religious minorities are afforded fewer legal protections than Muslim citizens. The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdiction, which reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The federal Shari’at court and the Shari’a bench of the Supreme Court serve as appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinances, and judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslims. The federal Shari’at court also may overturn any legislation judged to be inconsistent with the tenets of Islam.

The martial law era Hudood Ordinances criminalize nonmarital rape, extramarital sex, and various gambling, alcohol, and property offenses. The Hudood Ordinances reportedly are based on Islamic principles and are applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some Hudood Ordinance cases are subject to Hadd, or Koranic, punishment; others are subject to Tazir, or secular punishment. Although both types of cases are tried in ordinary criminal courts, special rules of evidence apply in Hadd cases. For example, a non-Muslim may testify only if the victim also is non-Muslim. Likewise, the testimony of women, Muslim or non-Muslim, is not admissible in cases involving Hadd punishments. Thus, if a Muslim man rapes a Muslim woman in the presence of women or non-Muslim men, he cannot be convicted under the Hudood Ordinances.

For both Muslims and non-Muslims, all consensual extramarital sexual relations are considered a violation of the Hudood Ordinances; thus, if a woman cannot prove the absence of consent in a rape case, there is a risk that she may be charged with a violation of the Hudood Ordinances for fornication or adultery. The maximum punishment for this offense is public flogging or stoning. According to a police official, in a majority of rape cases, the victims are pressured to drop rape charges because of the threat of Hudood adultery charges being brought against them. A parliamentary commission of inquiry for women has criticized the Hudood Ordinances and recommended their repeal. It also has been charged that the laws on adultery and rape have been subject to widespread misuse, with 95 percent of the women accused of adultery being found innocent in the court of first instance or on appeal. This commission found that the main victims of the Hudood Ordinances are poor women who are unable to defend themselves against slanderous charges. According

to the commission, the laws also have been used by husbands and other male family members to punish their wives and female family members for reasons that have nothing to do with sexual propriety. Approximately one-third or more of the women in jails in Lahore, Peshawar, and Mardan in 1998 were awaiting trial for adultery under the Hudood Ordinances. However, no Hadd punishment has been imposed since the Hudood Ordinances went into effect. Human rights monitors and women's groups believe that a narrow interpretation of Shari'a has had a harmful effect on the rights of women and minorities, as it reinforces popular attitudes and perceptions and contributes to an atmosphere in which discriminatory treatment of women and non-Muslims is accepted more readily.

Under the Anti-Terrorist Act, any act, including speech, intended to stir up religious hatred, is punishable by up to 7 years of rigorous imprisonment. In the antiterrorist courts, which virtually were shut down by the Supreme Court in 1998, cases were to be decided within 7 working days, and trials in absentia were permitted. Appeals to an appellate court also were required to occur within 7 days, but appellate authority since has been restored to the high courts and the Supreme Court. Under the act, bail is not to be granted if the judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the accused is guilty.

The Penal Code incorporates the doctrines of *Diyat* (blood money) and *Qisas* (roughly, an eye for an eye). *Qisas* is not known to have been invoked, but *Diyat* occasionally is used, especially in the NWFP, with the result that compensation sometimes is paid to the family of a murder victim in place of punishment of the murderer. Under these ordinances only the family of the victim, not the state, may pardon the defendant. Like the Hudood Ordinances, *Qisas* and *Diyat* apply to both ordinary criminal courts and Shari'at courts.

Section 295(a), the colonial-era blasphemy provision of the Penal Code, originally stipulated a maximum 2-year sentence for insulting the religion of any class of citizens. In 1991 this sentence was increased to 10 years. In 1982 Section 295(b) was added, which stipulated a sentence of life imprisonment for "whoever willfully defiles, damages, or desecrates a copy of the holy Koran." In 1986 during the martial law period, another amendment, Section 295(c), established the death penalty or life imprisonment for directly or indirectly defiling "the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed." For example, persons who overtly deny that Mohammad was the final prophet can be prosecuted for indirectly defiling the Prophet's name under Section 295(c). In 1991 a court struck down the option of life imprisonment for this offense. In 1997 cases filed under Penal Code Section 295(a) were transferred to antiterrorist courts. Personal rivals and the authorities have used these blasphemy laws, especially Section 295(c), to threaten, punish, or intimidate Ahmadis, Christians, and even Orthodox Muslims. No one has been executed by the State under any of these provisions; however, some persons have been sentenced to death, and religious extremists have killed persons accused under the provisions. The blasphemy laws also have been used to "settle scores" unrelated to religious activity, such as intrafamily or property disputes. In 1998 the previous Government instituted a policy that required magistrates to investigate the credibility of blasphemy allegations before filing formal charges; however, the Musharraf Government ended this policy due to opposition from some religious political parties.

Due to increasing local and international pressure to repeal or modify the blasphemy laws, Musharraf announced a proposal in April 2000 to modify the administration of the laws so that complainants would have to register new blasphemy cases with the local deputy commissioners instead of with police officials. The goal of this proposed change was to reduce the number of persons who are accused wrongly under the laws; however, many religious minority representatives stated that this suggested administrative change would have done little to protect their communities from being charged under the blasphemy laws. Religious and sectarian groups mounted large-scale protests against the proposed change and some religious leaders stated that if the laws were changed, even just procedurally, persons would be justified in killing blasphemers themselves. In May 2000, in response to increasing pressure and threats, Musharraf abandoned his proposed reforms to the blasphemy laws.

When blasphemy and other religious cases are brought to court, extremists often pack the courtroom and make public threats about the consequences of an acquittal. As a result, low level judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid a confrontation with, or violence from, the extremists, often continue trials indefinitely, and those accused of blasphemy often are burdened with further legal costs and repeated court appearances.

According to the Constitution, both the President and the Prime Minister must be Muslims, and all senior officials must swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology."

The Constitution states that "the state shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interest of minorities, including their due representation in the federal and provincial bodies," and the National Assembly and provincial assemblies have seats reserved for non-Muslims. However, following the October 1999 coup, the National and provincial assemblies were suspended.

The Government designates religion on citizens' passports. In order to obtain a passport, citizens must declare whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim; Muslims also must affirm that they accept the unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed, declare that Ahmadis are non-Muslims, and specifically denounce the founder of the Ahmadi movement.

On September 4, 1999, Lahore High Court Justice Nazir Akhtar reportedly stated that those accused of blasphemy "must be punished or killed on the spot without any trial and there is not need of the law." Christian leaders publicly criticized this statement and Justice Akhtar subsequently rescinded his remarks.

Although there are reserved seats in the National Assembly (NA) and the provincial assemblies for non-Muslims, the Government distinguishes between Muslims and non-Muslims with regard to political rights. In national and local elections, Muslims cast their votes for Muslim candidates by geographic locality, while non-Muslims can cast their votes only for at-large non-Muslim candidates. Since separate electorates exist for Muslims and non-Muslims, there is little participation by non-Muslims in the mainstream Muslim parties, and local mainstream parliamentary representatives have little incentive to promote their minority constituents' interests. Many Christian activists state that these "separate electorates" are the greatest obstacle to the attainment of Christian religious and civil liberties. Ahmadi leaders encourage the Ahmadis not to register as "non-Muslims" (since Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims, so most Ahmadis are completely unrepresented.

Until the suspension of the National Assembly (NA) after the October 1999 coup, Christians held four reserved seats, Hindus and members of scheduled castes another four; Ahmadis one; and Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and other non-Muslims one. The 1997 general election report states that each Christian NA member represented 327,606 persons; each Hindu and scheduled castes member, 319,029; the Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, and other non-Muslim NA member, 112,801; and the Ahmadi member, 104,244. These figures significantly understate the population of the religious minorities because they are based on 1981 census figures. However, legal provisions for minority reserved seats do not extend to the Senate and the federal Cabinet, which were composed entirely of Muslim members until the coup. The Prime Minister, federal ministers and ministers of state, as well as elected members of the Senate and National Assembly (including non-Muslims), must take a religious oath to "strive to preserve the Islamic ideology, which is the basis for the creation of Pakistan."

On June 28, 1999, the one-member election tribunal of the Peshawar high court disqualified Walter Siraj, the Christian seat member of the NWFP provincial assembly for alleged vote rigging.

The Ministry of Religious and Minority Affairs, the government ministry that is entrusted with safeguarding religious freedom, has on its masthead a Koranic verse: "Islam is the only religion acceptable to God." The Ministry claims that it spends 30 percent of its annual budget to assist indigent minorities, to repair minority places of worship, to set up minority-run small development schemes, and to celebrate minority festivals. However, the Bishops' Conference of the National Commission for Justice and Peace questioned its expenditures, observing that localities and villages housing minority citizens go without basic civic amenities. The Bishops' Conference, using official budget figures for expenditures in 1998, calculated that the Government actually spent \$17 (PRs 850) on each Muslim and only \$3.20 (PRs 16) on each minority citizen per month.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country, and proselytizing (except by Ahmadis) is allowed so long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge that they are not Muslim. However, all missionaries are required to have specific missionary visas, which have a validity of 2 to 5 years and allow only one entry into the country per year. These visas carry the annotation "missionary." Only "replacement" visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries are available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems are frequent. Proselytizing generally is considered socially inappropriate among Muslims; missionaries face some difficulties due to this perception. For example, some Sunni Muslim groups oppose missionary activities and have at times issued verbal threats against missionaries in order to discourage them from working.

While there is no law establishing the Koranic death penalty for apostates (those who convert from Islam), social pressure against such an action is so powerful that most such conversions reportedly take place in secret. According to missionaries, po-

lice and other local officials harass villagers and members of the poorer classes who convert. Reprisals and threats of reprisals against suspected converts are common.

In a highly publicized case in 1998, a district court in Rawalpindi removed three sisters from the custody of their Christian parents after the sisters allegedly had converted from Christianity to Islam. However, it is not clear to what extent the decision was based upon the parents' religion. A subsequent decision in March 1999 awarded custody of the two youngest girls to their older sister and her new Muslim husband; the eldest of the three sisters reportedly had married her attorney. The girls' parents attribute the loss of their children to the influence of religious extremists who packed the courtroom, and claim to have suffered harassment because of the case. The girls' family since has moved, and has relinquished contact with the girls out of fear of further persecution.

Upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian men remain legal; however, upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian women, or of other non-Muslims, which were performed under the rites of the previous religion, are considered dissolved.

Links with coreligionists in other countries are relatively trouble free. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan report no difficulties. Ismailis are in regular contact with their headquarters, and their officials, including Prince Karim Aga Khan, visit Pakistan regularly. Under reciprocal visa arrangements, Indian Hindu and Sikh leaders and groups travel regularly to Pakistan. However, the Government prohibits Ahmadis from participating in the Hajj (the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia).

The Constitution safeguards "education institutions with respect to religion." For example, no student can be forced to receive religious instruction or to participate in religious worship other than his or her own. It also prohibits the denial of religious instruction for students of any religious community or denomination.

"Islamiyyat" (Islamic studies) is compulsory for all Muslim students in state-run schools. In March 1998, the Government announced a new education policy that increased mandatory Islamic instruction in public schools. While students of other faiths are not required to study Islam, they are not provided with parallel studies in their own religions. In practice teachers compel many non-Muslim students to complete Islamic studies.

The Government nationalized all church schools and colleges in Punjab and Sindh in 1972. The Government of Sindh gradually denationalized church schools without compensation from 1985 to 1995. The Government of Punjab devised a scheme to denationalize schools and return them to their original owners in 1996. In Punjab, several schools belonging to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. were denationalized and returned to the former owners in 1998. Other church-affiliated institutions, including the prestigious Kinnaird College, received or were granted administrative autonomy. Discussions currently are underway between the government of Punjab and the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. on the denationalization of Forman Christian College. Throughout 1999, religion-based political parties in Punjab opposed denationalization of schools.

The Constitution specifically prohibits discriminatory admission to any governmental educational institution solely on the basis of religion; however, students must declare their religion on their application forms. Muslim students must declare in writing that they believe in the unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed; non-Muslims must have their religion verified by the head of their local religious community. Many Ahmadis and Christians report that they face discrimination in applying to government educational institutions due to their religious affiliation.

The Constitution provides for the "freedom to manage religious institutions." In principle, the Government does not restrict organized religions from establishing places of worship and training members of the clergy. However, in practice, Ahmadis suffer from restrictions on this right. Several Ahmadi mosques have reportedly been closed; others have reportedly been violated. Ahmadis also are prohibited from being buried in Muslim graveyards.

In 1998 the Punjab Assembly unanimously passed a resolution to change the name of the Punjab town that serves as the administrative religious center of the Ahmadi community. In March 1999, the son of a prominent Muslim fundamentalist filed charges with the police against two Ahmadi leaders, Mirza Masroor Ahmad and Colonel Ayyaz Mahmud (ret.) for allegedly instructing Ahmadi activists to write in the former Ahmadi name of the town (Rabwah) on a newly installed plaque. In April 1999, four Ahmadi leaders were arrested on blasphemy charges for allegedly inciting desecration of the plaque. The charges eventually were dropped and the four were released; however, they still face criminal charges under the Maintenance of Public Order Act.

Separate categories exist for different religions in the administration of specific religious sites. Hindus and Sikhs, because of population shifts that occurred between India and Pakistan after partition, come under the auspices of the Evacuee Property Board, which is located in Lahore and is empowered to settle disputes regarding Hindu and Sikh property. However, Hindus and Sikhs may settle such disputes in civil courts. Christian churches are free to take their disputes over religious property and management to the courts. Some minorities have expressed displeasure over government management of religious property. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan operate regular seminary programs.

In Sindh Muslim mosques and shrines come under the purview of the Auqaf Administration Department, a branch of the provincial government devoted to the upkeep of shrines and mosques, facilities for pilgrims, and the resolution of disputes over possession of a religious site. In both Sindh and Baluchistan, the Government has provided funds for the upkeep and repair of the Hindu Gurumander temple in Karachi, and funded the repair of Hindu temples damaged by Muslim rioters protesting the destruction of the Babri mosque by Hindu mobs in Ayodhya, India in 1992.

Permission to buy land comes from one municipal bureaucracy, and permission to build a house of worship from another. With all religious groups, the process appears to be subject to bureaucratic delays and requests for bribes. In May 1999, the International Church of Karachi, an evangelical congregation serving missionaries, foreigners, and English-speaking Pakistanis, were denied permission to build after refusing to pay a large bribe. The congregation continues to meet in rented quarters.

The Constitution protects religious minorities against being taxed to support the majority religion; no one may be forced to pay taxes for the support of any religion other than his or her own. The majority Sunni Muslims are subject to the "zakat," a religious tax of 2.5 percent of their income, which is taken once a year from their bank accounts. Shi'a Muslims are exempted from the tax. Non-Muslims do not have a special tax.

The Government does not restrict religious publishing per se; however, the Government restricts the right to freedom of speech with regard to religion. Speaking in opposition to Islam and publishing an attack on Islam or its Prophet are prohibited. The Penal Code mandates the death sentence for anyone defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammed, life imprisonment for desecrating the Koran, and up to 10 years' imprisonment for insulting another's religious beliefs with intent to outrage religious feelings. Although prosecutions appear to be few, the threat of the blasphemy law is ever present. The effectively suspended Anti-Terrorist Act stipulates imprisonment with rigorous labor for up to 7 years for using abusive or insulting words, or possessing or distributing written or recorded material, with intent to stir up sectarian hatred. No warrant is required to seize such material.

Ahmadis say that they suffer from restrictions on their press. Christian scriptures and books are available in Karachi and in traveling bookmobiles. However, the owner of a Christian bookshop in Karachi has reported frequent questioning by local Muslim religious leaders and occasional questioning by the police. Such questioning may lead to self-censorship among Christians. Hindu and Parsi scriptures are freely available. Foreign books and magazines may be imported freely, but are subject to censorship for objectionable religious content.

In December 1999, the Supreme Court ruled that charging interest is un-Islamic and directed the Government to implement an interest-free financial system by June 2001.

#### *Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom*

No estimate of the number of religious detainees exists; however, the Government has arrested and detained numerous Muslims and non-Muslims for their religious beliefs and practices under the blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws. The blasphemy laws were meant to protect both majority and minority faiths from discrimination or abuse; however, in practice these laws frequently are used by rivals and the authorities to threaten, punish, or intimidate religious minorities. Credible sources estimate that several hundred persons have been arrested since the laws were implemented; however, significantly fewer persons have been tried. Most of the several hundred persons arrested since 1989 have been released due to a lack of sufficient evidence. According to the Bishops' Conference of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), religious minorities constitute a greater than expected proportion of the prison population. Prison conditions, except for the "class A" facilities provided to wealthy and politically high profile prisoners, are extremely poor and constitute a threat to the life and health of prisoners. According to the NCJP, non-Muslim prisoners do not enjoy the same facilities as Muslim inmates.

According to Ahmadi sources, 80 Ahmadis were implicated in criminal cases on a "religious basis" (including blasphemy) in 22 cases in 1999. Seven Ahmadis were charged in Bakhoo Bhatti, Punjab, with blasphemy on July 3, 1999. On July 19, 1999 two Ahmadis were charged in Muzaffargarh for preaching and distributing religious literature; the case later was transferred to an antiterrorist court at Dera Ghazi Khan. Ahmadi sources report that bail was denied; the two Ahmadis remained in prison as of mid-2000. On July 21, 1999, authorities reportedly arrested a man from District Sialkot, Punjab for issuing a call to prayer. On September 6, 1999, police officials arrested Dr. Abdul Ghani for preaching; he was denied bail by the antiterrorist court and remained in prison as of mid-2000. In September 1999, Azharur Rehman was arrested for preaching; his trial was underway as of mid-2000. On April 27, 2000 four Ahmadis were arrested for preaching in District Sialkot Punjab. According to Ahmadi sources, on July 30, 1999, a subdivisional magistrate ordered an Ahmadi mosque sealed in Naseerabad, Sindh; it remained sealed as of mid-2000. Ahmadi sources report that on September 8, 1999, police personnel arrested an Ahmadi in Bahawalnagar, Punjab for building a place of worship. Officials reportedly closed the mosque and confiscated Ahmadi books and a copy of the Koran. On August 10, 1999, an Ahmadi from Mirpur Khas, Sindh was arrested for wearing a shirt with an inscription of the Kalima (Islamic creed) after he was attacked by extremists who tore the shirt off of him; the man remained in prison as of mid-2000. On September 8, 1999, police officials arrested an Ahmadi from Sialkot district for preaching his faith; he currently is serving a 10-year term in prison. On September 16, 1999, police arrested one Ahmadi in Daska, Sialkot district, Punjab, for preaching; his plea for bail was rejected and he remains in jail. On September 22, 1999 an Ahmadi from Jahanian Shah was arrested; he later was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment. Three Ahmadis were convicted of blasphemy in December 1997; they were found guilty and were sentenced to life imprisonment and \$1,250 (PRs 50,000) fines. Lawyers for the men appealed the decision to the Lahore high court, whose ruling had not been issued as of mid-2000. According to Ahmadi sources, 16 Ahmadis have been charged under the blasphemy laws since the October 12, 1999 coup.

In December 1999, several hundred persons looted and burned property in Haveli Lakha, Okara district, Punjab, which belonged to Mohammad Nawaz, a local Ahmadi leader accused of planning to build an Ahmadi house of worship. A neighbor reportedly incited the incident by accusing Nawaz of building the house of worship after the two were involved in a property dispute. Nawaz, a doctor, reportedly intended to build a free clinic next to his home. The mob destroyed the clinic and looted and burned Nawaz's home. According to Ahmadi sources, police personnel arrived at the scene, but did nothing to stop the crowd. As of mid-2000, neither the neighbor nor anyone in the crowd had been arrested or questioned in connection with the incident, and police took no steps to find or return any of Nawaz's property. However, Nawaz and his two sons were arrested and charged with blasphemy. Several days later, they were released on bail; however, the blasphemy case against them was pending as of mid-2000. Three other Ahmadis in Haveli Lakha also were charged with blasphemy in connection with the incident, even though they were not in town at the time.

Christian minorities also are frequent targets of the blasphemy laws. According to the NCJP, police arrested two Christians in 1998 for allegedly throwing pages of the Koran onto their neighbor's lawn; they were released on bail during the period covered by this report. In October 1999, Shafiq Masih was acquitted of a blasphemy charge, but was sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment for having uttered derogatory comments against the Prophet Mohammed; he is appealing the decision. In May 2000, a lower court in Sialkot district, Punjab, sentenced two Christian brothers to 35 years' imprisonment each and fined both of them \$1,500 (75,000 RS). The brothers were convicted of desecrating the Koran and blaspheming against the Prophet Mohammed; both cases were registered by an ice cream vendor who allegedly fought with the brothers after he asked them to use their own dishes, stating that his were reserved for Muslim customers. Lawyers for the brothers filed an appeal in the Lahore high court. On May 2, 2000, Augustine Ashiq Masih was charged with blaspheming against the Prophet in Faisalbad. According to press reports, Masih converted to Islam, married a Muslim woman, and then converted back to Christianity, which angered local Muslims who brought the charges against him. Ayub Masih (detained since 1996) was convicted of blasphemy for making favorable comments about Salman Rushdie, the author of the controversial book, "The Satanic Verses," and was sentenced to death in April 1998. Ayub's family and 13 other landless Christian families were forced from their village in 1996 following the charges, and he survived an attempt on his life in 1997, when he was shot at outside of the courtroom while in trial. The case was pending appeal before the Lahore high court

at the end of June 2000. In May 1998, police arrested a Christian in Sahiwal, Punjab for stoning a billboard that bore Islamic scripture; he remained in prison at the end of June 2000. Another Christian, Ranjha Masih, was arrested and charged with blasphemy for allegedly throwing stones at an Islamic sign in 1998; he remained in prison as of mid-2000.

Police also arrest Muslims under the blasphemy laws; government officials maintain that about two-thirds of the total blasphemy cases that have been brought to trial have affected Muslims. In September 1998, a Shi'a Muslim, Ghulam Akbar, was convicted of blasphemy in Rahimyar Khan, Punjab, for allegedly making derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammed in 1995. He was sentenced to death, the first time that a Muslim had been sentenced to death for a violation of the blasphemy law. The case was pending as of mid-2000.

In June 1999, two Muslim faith healers from Lahore were arrested for allegedly burning a copy of the Koran; the healers claimed to be burning evil spirits. Police officials later stated that they were suffering from mental illness. According to the NCJP, in October 1999, police officials arrested two Muslims from Bhati Gate Lahore, Punjab for allegedly burning a copy of the Koran; they were released on bail in early 2000.

In November 1999, an antiterrorist court in Sindh convicted two Muslim journalists of blaspheming the Prophet Mohammed; both journalists were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and a large monetary fine. In March 2000, an antiterrorist court in Sindh convicted Muslim author, Gohar Shahi in absentia under the blasphemy laws.

There are scattered reports that authorities interrogate persons due to their religious beliefs or practices.

The law regulates arrest and detention procedures; however, the authorities do not always comply with the law, and police arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Violence in Punjab has prompted the Government on several occasions to round up hundreds of members of religious extremist groups and students at religious schools (madrassahs) believed to be terrorist recruiting centers and training grounds. The police also arrested demonstrators, including members of religious minorities.

The Punjab government ordered a crackdown on extremists in early October 1999; as a result several hundred persons were arrested, including the leader of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Maulana Mohammad Azam Tariq, and SSP branch president Maulana Mohammad Ahmad Ludhianvi. Tariq was released after a year of imprisonment.

In July 1999, police personnel arrested four Hindus who had traveled to Islamabad from around the country to request visas for travel to India. According to credible sources, police interrogated the Hindus at length and subsequently released them.

The authorities sometimes prevent leaders of politico-religious parties from traveling to certain areas if they believe that the presence of such leaders would increase sectarian tensions or cause public violence.

There have been press reports that the authorities are conducting surveillance on the Ahmadis and their institutions.

There have been instances in which police have used excessive force against individuals because of their religious beliefs and practices. The police also have failed to act against persons who use force against other individuals due to their religious beliefs. Both the Christian and Ahmadi communities have documented instances of the use of excessive force by the police and police inaction to prevent violent, and often lethal, attacks on members of their communities. For example, both the Christian and Ahmadi communities claim that persons have been murdered because of their religious beliefs.

Police torture and other forms of mistreatment of persons in custody are common. However, there were no confirmed reports of torture of prisoners or detainees based on their religious beliefs during the period covered by this report. There were a number of deaths in police custody during the period covered by this report. Two of the persons who died in police custody were Christians; however, they were not arrested in connection with their religious beliefs. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Asif Masih was tortured and killed by police personnel in Gujranwala in early 2000; officials have not disclosed the reason for his arrest. The district magistrate ordered an inquiry; however, the inquiry results were not known by mid-2000. In September 1999, police personnel arrested Ilyas Masih, a Christian, on suspicion of possessing illegal firearms. According to the NCJP, Masih died as a result of being tortured in police custody. It is unclear if Masih's religion played any role in his death.

Ahmadis, Christians, and other minority groups also report that they experience harassment and discrimination in public sector employment. Religious minorities very rarely are promoted to senior ranks in civil service or the military.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

The Musharraf Government took several specific steps that slightly improved the situation of religious minorities. For example, Musharraf abandoned his predecessor's proposal to implement Shari'a law through a constitutional amendment. In February 2000, Musharraf created a minority affairs portfolio and appointed a Christian to fill the position. According to persons in religious minority communities, the Musharraf Government made efforts to seek minority input into decision-making and offered cabinet positions to individuals from religious minority communities. The tenor of government-minority relations changed somewhat since the October 1999 coup. Hostile comments from government officials regarding minorities are less prevalent since the change in Government, and some officials in the Musharraf Government took steps to reach out to some minority communities.

In April 2000, the Government convened a human rights convention, which included representatives from most of the religious minority groups, stating that it was "imperative" that the country "build a culture" that was conducive to human rights. At the convention, Musharraf announced a proposed change in the implementation of the blasphemy laws. The proposed change was for local administrators, as presumably neutral parties, to review all accusations of blasphemy before a case is filed with police officials; however, the Musharraf Government did not implement this change due to strong opposition from some Muslim groups.

Government officials have discussed the possibility of eliminating the separate electorate system as a part of electoral reforms currently being considered; however, no specific steps were taken to implement this reform as of mid-2000.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. Citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Discriminatory religious legislation has encouraged an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which has led to acts of violence directed against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and Zikris. Members of religious minorities are subject to violence and harassment, and police at times refuse to prevent such actions or to charge persons who commit them.

There are many sectarian divisions in the country, growing intolerance for religious minorities within society, and violence between religious groups, particularly between rival Sunni and Shi'a organizations, frequently occurred during the period covered by this report. There were instances when the Government failed to intervene in cases of societal violence (also see Section I). One newspaper estimated that 300 persons were killed in sectarian attacks during the last 2 years. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported that nearly 1,000 persons were killed in religious or ethnic violence each year since 1990.

A wave of violence occurred just prior to the October 1999 coup, which claimed dozens of lives. Following the coup, there was a period of relative quiet until the traditionally tense Muharram period in April 2000, when a number of persons were killed in incidents of sectarian violence. Shi'a activists report that approximately 40 Shi'as have been killed since the coup.

On August 19, 1999, members of an extremist Shi'a organization, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-Jafria (TJP), fired on a rally held by members of the rival Sunni militant group, Sipah-e-Sahabah Pakistan, killing Mohammed Khalid Rajput. On the following day, a Shi'a mourning procession was fired upon, although there were no casualties. Five persons were charged in connection with the killing of Rajput; three had been arrested by June 30, 2000. On September 6, 1999, an explosion in a madrassah in Karachi injured more than 20 persons; no arrests have been made in connection with this attack. On September 24, 1999, three members of the SSP killed Khurshid Anwar, the Secretary General of the TJP, his daughter, and his bodyguard, setting off a wave of sectarian violence. All three of the SSP leaders were arrested soon after the killing and later were released; no one has been charged with the murder. After Anwar's murder, Shi'a and Sunni extremist groups perpetrated numerous attacks in which more than 30 persons were killed. Among those killed were the president of the Gujranwala division of the TJP, Ijaz Hussain Rasool Nagri, on September 30, 1999; 9 worshipers in a Shi'a mosque in Karachi on October 1, 1999; the assistant inspector general of police in the NWFP, Farooq



Haider, a Shi'a, on October 2, 1999; 5 students in a Sunni madrassah in Karachi on October 2, 1999; and Dr. Quaiser Abbas Sayyal, a relative of an advisor to the Prime Minister, along with several others, in a clinic in Lahore in early October 1999. On October 6, 1999, Nisa Ali Hazara, a Shi'a member of the Baluch assembly and the Baluchistan Education Minister, was shot and injured in Quetta by masked gunmen as his car left the Baluch assembly; his driver was killed. Also on October 6, 1999, two Shi'a homeopathic doctors, Al-e Hassan and Muttasim Hassan, were shot and killed at their home in Karachi by motorcycle gunmen; another doctor, Mohammad Nisar, an influential member of the Sunni Jamaat-i-Islam, was killed in Karachi earlier on the same day. Aun Mohammed Rizvi, a senior Shi'a official from the state-run television station, was shot and killed by motorcycle gunmen in Rawalpindi on October 7, 1999. On October 8, 1999, unknown assailants killed Syed Abbas Shah, president of the TJP, near Bhalwal.

On November 4, 1999, 3 explosions occurred in Murdike, where the Sunni militant group Lashkar-e-Taibe was holding its annual conference; 1 person was killed and more than 30 others were injured. On December 27, 1999, 13 Sunnis were killed and 6 were injured in Sikanderpur village, Haripur district, NWFP. The victims reportedly belonged to the SSP and were returning from the funeral of another SSP member and were killed by three Shi'as. On December 28, 1999, thousands of SSP members destroyed homes and shops belonging to local Shi'as after attending the funerals of those killed the previous day. As of mid-2000, no suspects were detained in connection with these events.

In August 1999, the leader of the Sunni religious party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islami (JUI) Fazlur Rehman, accused the Aga Khan Foundation of the killing of a Sunni religious leader and his nephew in Chitral and called for the closure of Aga Khan activities. The Sunni leader was killed by an Ismaili in a property dispute on August 19, 1999. (The Aga Khan Foundation is a community service organization sponsored by Ismaili Shi'as.)

On January 17, 2000, a bomb exploded in front of a Karachi mosque, killing 9 persons and injuring 25. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.

Several incidents of sectarian violence between rival Sunni and Shi'a groups occurred during Muharram, during which Shi'a Muslims mourn the deaths of the Prophet Mohammed's nephew, Ali and his son Hussain; this period highlights the major division between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims over whether Islam should be ruled by the codified Sunnah or by the lineal successors of the Prophet. On April 7, 2000, a Shi'a lawyer and the secretary general of TJP, Syed Waqar Hussain, his son, and his driver were killed by unknown gunmen in Karachi; the assailants may have been members of the extremist SSP. On April 12, 2000, in the worst incident of sectarian violence since the coup, unknown assailants attacked a Shi'a religious congregation in Mullo Wali, Rawalpindi, with grenades and bullets, killing 19 persons and injuring 37. Police personnel arrested several Sunni Muslims following the attack.

On April 19, 2000, unknown gunmen killed TJP activist, Iqbal Hussain in Multan. On April 26, 2000, unknown assailants killed TJP activist, Syed Farrukh Birjis Haider and his personal aide in Khanewal. On April 28, 2000, unknown gunmen killed local Shi'a leader Hakeem Syed Shahbaz Hussain Sherazi in Chishtian. On May 2, 2000, unidentified assailants killed a Shi'a doctor, his pharmaceutical dispenser, and a patient in the doctor's Karachi office. The next day, unknown assailants killed Shi'a lawyer, Malik Ibrar Hussain in Toba Tek Singh, Punjab. On May 15, 2000, unknown assailants killed Shi'a lawyer Syed Sardar Hussain Jafri. Unknown assailants also killed Quadratullah Cheema, the chief of the Ahmadi community of Khanpur, Punjab during the period covered by this report. On May 19, 2000, unknown assailants killed eminent Sunni cleric Maulana Yousuf Ludhianvi, and Abdur Rehman, a teacher at the Sunni Banuri Town religious school in Karachi; following these murders, hundreds of Sunni Muslims rioted in Karachi.

In March 2000, 12 men broke into the Lourdes Convent and attacked Sister Christine, a 78-year old nun; she died in a nearby hospital a few days later. According to the Christian Liberation Front (CLF), a nongovernmental organization (NGO), the perpetrators of the attack were Muslims who previously had accused Sister Christine of proselytizing. Police officials did not arrest anyone in connection with this attack. In May 2000, five masked men stopped a factory bus of female factory employees in Ferozewala and raped six to eight Christian girls who were passengers; the assailants reportedly spared the two Muslim passengers on the bus. Initially, police officials urged the girls to report that were robbed, not raped; however, when the CLF complained to government officials, the officials immediately registered the cases as rape cases, arrested two suspects, and promised to investigate police behavior. Three of the suspects were charged under the Hudood Ordinances and are scheduled to stand trial in September 2000.

In July 1999, the Government released Sunni extremist leader Mohammad Azam Tariq, chief of the SSP, who had been arrested in May 1997 and charged with the murder of a former PPP Member of Parliament and in 58 other cases of murder, terrorism, and incitement to sectarian violence. The SSP and its militant offshoot, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, frequently are involved in anti-Shi'a sectarian violence.

Sectarian violence among members of different religious groups continued to be a serious problem throughout the period covered by this report; Ahmadis, Christians and other religious minorities often were the targets of this violence. In September 1999, a mob raided a church in Sangla Hill, Punjab, allegedly attacking members of the congregation as they fled the church. In October 1999, a Sunni Muslim youth set fire to St. Peter's Catholic Church in Lahore. Police arrested the individual and charged him under the blasphemy laws; his case was pending as of mid-2000. In December 1999, a mob vandalized the home of an Ahmadi in Okara district, Punjab, in the presence of some members of the local administration; police officials reportedly charged the Ahmadi and his two sons under the blasphemy laws. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, in January 2000, persons broke into a church in Sialkot and desecrated religious literature.

In 1997 mobs looted and burned the Christian village of Shantinagar in Punjab. Local police participated in the attack and are suspected of having instigated the riot by inventing spurious charges that a Christian man had desecrated a copy of the Koran. Hundreds of homes and a dozen churches were destroyed, and 20,000 persons were left homeless. The Government has rebuilt damaged and destroyed homes, but has not provided compensation for personal property lost in the incident. The police officers accused in the incident were suspended temporarily; however, after their suspension they either were transferred or granted early retirement. The results of the official investigation of the incident were never made public; all of the 86 persons who were charged with offenses related to the attack remain free on bail and there was no indication that authorities planned to bring them to trial.

Most Ahmadis are home-schooled or go to private Ahmadi-run schools. Those Ahmadi students in public schools often are subject to abuse by their non-Ahmadi classmates. The quality of teachers assigned to predominately Ahmadi schools by the Government reportedly is poor. Christian students reportedly sometimes are forced to eat at separate tables in public schools that are predominately Muslim.

On some university campuses, well-armed groups of students, primarily from radical religious organizations, clash with and intimidate other students, instructors, and administrators on matter of language, syllabus, examination policies, grades, doctrines, and dress. These groups facilitate cheating on examinations, interfere in the hiring of staff at the campuses, control new admissions, and sometimes control the funds of their institutions. At Punjab University, the largest university in the province, Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba (IJT—the student wing of the religious political party Jaamat-i-Islami) imposes its self-defined code of conduct on teachers and students.

Discrimination in employment is believed to be widespread (also see Section I). Christians in particular have difficulty finding jobs other than those of menial labor, although Christian activists say that the employment situation has improved somewhat in the private sector. There is a problem of bonded labor in Pakistan and, according to the Bishops' Conference of Pakistan's National Commission for Justice and Peace, the vast majority of bonded labor in certain sectors is non-Muslim. All are subject to the same conditions, whether they are Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. In September 1999, the Government removed colonial-era entries for "sect" from government job application forms to prevent discrimination in hiring. However, the faith of some, particularly of Christians, often can be ascertained from their names.

While many Christians are in the poorest socioeconomic groups, this may be due more to ethnic and social factors than to religion, per se. These factors also may account for a substantial measure of the discrimination that poor Christians face. In Karachi, the majority of Roman Catholics are Goan Christians, or descendants of Eurasian marriages. They often are light-skinned and are relatively well-educated and prosperous, in sharp contrast to their coreligionists (mostly members of evangelical denominations), who are often dark-skinned and poorly educated. Many poor Christians remain in the profession bequeathed by their low caste Hindu ancestors (most of whom were "untouchables"). Their lot, though somewhat better today than in the past, does not reflect any major progress in spite of over 100 years of consistent missionary aid and development.

Ahmadis also have limited chances for advancement into management levels in government service. Even the rumor that someone may be an Ahmadi or have Ahmadi relatives can stifle opportunities for employment or promotion.

Although there are few if any citizens who are Jewish, anti-Semitic sentiments appear to be widespread, and anti-Semitic articles in the press are relatively common.

On May 8, 2000, 19 religious parties and politico-religious groups announced their decision to launch a strike on May 19 to pressure the Government not to amend the blasphemy laws, as well as to reinstate Friday as the country's official weekly holiday, ban NGO's funded by Christian and Jewish groups, and abandon the idea of reforming the country's madrassahs. The religious parties cancelled the strike after they received assurances from the Government that the proposed amendments to the blasphemy laws would not be enacted. However, on May 11, 2000, approximately 750 religious activists gathered to protest the proposed amendment to the blasphemy laws; some speakers at the protest said that if the blasphemy laws were amended, persons would be justified in killing blasphemers themselves (also see Section I.).

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Advocacy, programming, and reporting on issues of religious freedom and persecution form a significant part of the work of the U.S. Embassy and the consulates in Pakistan. U.S. representatives maintain regular contacts with major Muslim and minority religious groups. U.S. representatives also maintain a dialog with government, religious, and minority community representatives to encourage religious freedom and to discuss problems. U.S. representatives closely monitor the situation and act when appropriate. For example, embassy officials and the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom met with high-level government officials in February 2000 to discuss the blasphemy laws, separate electorates for religious minorities, and the issue of impunity for violent sectarian groups. On an informal basis, the Embassy has assisted some Christian-affiliated relief organizations in guiding paperwork through government channels. The Embassy also has assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up on specific cases involving religious minorities.

## SRI LANKA

Although the Constitution gives Buddhism a foremost position, it also provides for the right of members of other faiths to practice their religion freely, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Despite generally amicable relations among persons of different faiths, there has been occasional resistance by Buddhists to Christian church activity, and in particular to the growth of evangelical Christian denominations. The courts generally have upheld the right of these groups to worship and to construct facilities to house their congregations. However, the State limits the number of foreign religious workers granted temporary residence permits.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution gives Buddhism a foremost position, but it also provides for the right of members of other faiths to practice their religions freely, and the Government respects this right in practice.

There is a Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs and a Ministry of Buddha "Sasana" or Buddhist Affairs; the same person currently leads both ministries. Within the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs, there is a Department of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs and a Department of Muslim Cultural and Religious Affairs. A Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs monitors government relations with the Christian denominations, which effectively have resisted greater government involvement in their affairs. Instead they are registered individually through acts of Parliament or as corporations under domestic law.

#### *Religious Demography*

Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity all are practiced in the country. Approximately 70 percent of the population are Buddhist, 15 percent are Hindu, 7 per-

cent are Muslim, and 8 percent are Christian. There also are small numbers of Ba-ha'is. Christians tend to be concentrated in the western part of the country, with much of the north almost exclusively Hindu. The other parts of the country have a mixture of religions, with Buddhism overwhelmingly present in the south.

The majority of Sinhalese are Theravada Buddhists. Almost all of the Muslims are Sunnis, with a small minority of Shi'as, including members of the Borah community. Roman Catholics account for almost 90 percent of the Christians, with Anglicans and other mainstream Protestant churches also present in the cities. The Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Assemblies of God are present as well. Evangelical Christian groups have made gains in membership in recent years, although the overall number of members in these groups still is small.

#### *Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Foreign clergy may work in the country, but for the last 30 years, the Government has taken steps to limit the number of foreign Christian religious workers given temporary work permits. Permission usually is restricted to denominations that are registered formally with the Government. Most religious workers in the country, including most Christian clergy, are Sri Lankan in origin.

Some evangelical Christians, who constitute less than 1 percent of the population, have expressed concern that their efforts at proselytization often are met with hostility and harassment by the local Buddhist clergy and others opposed to their work. They sometimes complain that the Government tacitly condones such harassment. However, there is no evidence to support this claim. The Assemblies of God filed a fundamental rights case with the Supreme Court in 1997, after the local village council in Gampaha tried to block the construction of a church on the grounds that it would interfere with Buddhism. The Church reached agreement with the local council before the Supreme Court heard the case, and the building project was allowed to proceed. The denomination complains that it continues to face opposition at the local level in many places but states that legal action or the threat of legal action generally has resulted in the Church being allowed to construct facilities for its congregations and conduct worship services.

Religion is a mandatory subject in the school curriculum. Parents and children can choose which religion a child studies: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or Christianity. Religion is taught in schools from an academic point of view.

Despite the constitutional preference for Buddhism, major religious festivals of all faiths are celebrated as national holidays.

The Government has established councils for interfaith understanding.

Issues related to family law, including divorce, child custody, and inheritance are adjudicated by the customary law of each ethnic or religious group. In 1995 the Government raised the minimum age of marriage for women from 12 to 18 years, except in the case of Muslims, who continue to follow their customary religious practices. The application of different legal practices based on membership in a religious or ethnic group can result in discrimination against women.

There is no tax exemption for religious organizations as such. However, churches and temples are allowed to register as charitable organizations and therefore are entitled to some tax relief.

For the past 17 years the Government (controlled by the Sinhalese, and predominantly Buddhist, majority) has fought the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an insurgent organization fighting for a separate state for the country's Tamil (and predominantly Hindu) minority. Religion does not play a significant role in the conflict, which essentially is rooted in linguistic, ethnic, and political differences. Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians all have been affected by the conflict, which has claimed more than 60,000 lives. The military has issued warnings via public radio before commencing major operations, instructing civilians to congregate at safe zones around churches and temples; however, in the conflict areas in the north, the Government occasionally has been accused of bombing and shelling Hindu temples and Christian churches. In March 1999, government forces recaptured the town of Madhu in the northwestern area of the country from the LTTE, the site of a famous Catholic shrine. Because Madhu was controlled by the LTTE, for several years Catholics from the south had not been able to make the pilgrimage to Madhu. After the town was recaptured by government forces, Catholics were able to resume the pilgrimage, but recapture of the shrine by the LTTE in November 1999 once again limited access.

Security force personnel probably were responsible for the 1997 death of Reverend Innasi Arulpalan, a priest from the Jaffna diocese of the Church of South India. Although there were reports that witnesses claimed that the army took away Reverend Arulpalan and two other individuals, these reports could not be confirmed. The military initially formally denied responsibility for the incident and placed the

blame on the LTTE. Senior military officials later suggested that the Reverend may have been killed accidentally, because his death occurred near the army's forward defense lines, an area where confrontations with the LTTE were common. Despite a promise of further investigation into the matter, the Government has not produced additional information regarding the case. There is no evidence to indicate that his religious beliefs or affiliation were a factor in his killing.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

The LTTE has targeted Buddhist sites, most notably the historic Dalada Maligawa or "Temple of the Tooth," the holiest Buddhist shrine in the country, in the town of Kandy on January 25, 1998. Thirteen worshipers, including several children, were killed by the bombing. Following a bombing in Colombo in October 1997, an LTTE suicide bomber threw a grenade into a temple compound and killed a Buddhist monk. In 1985 the LTTE massacred 150 persons worshiping at a holy Buddhist site in Anuradhapura. In 1987 the LTTE killed 31 Buddhist monks.

The LTTE has discriminated against Muslims, and in 1990 expelled some 46,000 Muslim inhabitants—virtually the entire Muslim population—from their homes in areas under LTTE control in the northern part of the island. Most of these persons remain displaced and currently live in or near welfare centers. Although some Muslims returned to Jaffna in 1997, they did not remain there due to the continuing threat posed by the LTTE. There are credible reports that the LTTE has warned thousands of Muslims displaced from the Mannar area not to return to their homes until the conflict is over. In the past, the LTTE has expropriated Muslim homes, lands, and businesses and threatened Muslim families with death if they attempt to return. However, it appears that these attacks by the LTTE are not targeted against persons due to their religious beliefs, but that they are targeted as part of an overall strategy to clear the north and east of persons not sympathetic to the cause of an independent Tamil state.

The LTTE has been accused in the past of using church and temple compounds, where civilians are instructed by the Government to congregate in the event of hostilities, as shields for the storage of munitions.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION II. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Discrimination based on religious differences is much less common than discrimination based on ethnic group or caste. In general, the members of the various faiths tend to be tolerant of each other's religious beliefs. However, on occasion, evangelical Christians have been harassed by Buddhist monks for their attempts to convert Buddhists to Christianity, and sometimes complain that the Government tacitly condones such harassment, although there is no evidence to support this claim (see Section I).

On April 2, 1999, two bombs were planted in an Assemblies of God prayer hall under construction in the mainly Buddhist town of Tissamaharama (in the south). One of the bombs exploded that night, causing a small amount of structural damage to the building. The other bomb was found on the morning of April 3 and defused. No one was injured in these incidents. According to his widow, Lionel Jayasinghe, the founder of the congregation, was killed on March 25, 1988, because his ambition to convert Buddhists to Christianity met with violent opposition from his neighbors. His death was investigated by the authorities, but no arrests were made in connection with the killing. Jayasinghe's widow now leads the congregation founded by her husband.

There are reports that members of various religious groups give preference in hiring in the private sector to members of their own group or denomination. This practice likely is linked to the country's ongoing ethnic problems and does not appear to be based principally on religion. There is no indication of preference in employment in the public sector on the basis of religion.

The Borah Muslim World Congress held in April 1999 attracted more than 3,000 participants from a number of countries to hear remarks by the group's spiritual leader, Dr. Syenda Mohammed Burhamuddin.

In December 1997, a mob led by Buddhist clerics attacked an Assemblies of God church in Matara, damaging it severely in the process. The mob also reportedly assaulted several members of the congregation. Police were stationed in the area due

to the size of the crowd, and intervened to help some of the congregation to leave the area. Police also have investigated the incident, but no one has been charged. However, relations between the Assemblies of God and the Buddhist communities in Matara have since returned to normal.

In mid-February 1999, a group of religious leaders from the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities made a 3-day visit to the north central part of the country, which is controlled by the LTTE. The purpose of the visit was to assess the humanitarian situation in the region and to talk with senior LTTE leaders to discuss the conflict and the prospects for peace. The group later met with the President, but there were few concrete results from the meeting. Follow-up meetings with the LTTE, which were scheduled for mid-1999, were cancelled after government forces captured additional LTTE-held territory north of the town of Madhu. Religious leaders have continued to serve as unofficial envoys between the two warring sides.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of its promotion of human rights. Representatives of the Embassy regularly meet with representatives of all of the country's religious groups to review a wide range of human rights, ethnic, and religious freedom issues. The U.S. Ambassador has met with many religious figures, both in Colombo and in his travels around the country. Christian bishops and prominent Buddhist monks, as well as prominent members of the Hindu and Muslim communities, are in regular contact with the Embassy. The Embassy has been supportive of efforts by interfaith religious leaders to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Sri Lanka.

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## **APPENDIXES**

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## APPENDIX A

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### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

#### Preamble

*Whereas* recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world;

*Whereas* disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people;

*Whereas* it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law;

*Whereas* it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations;

*Whereas* the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom;

*Whereas* Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

*Whereas* a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge;

*Now, therefore*, The General Assembly, proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup>

#### Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

#### Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs,

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<sup>1</sup>Hundred and eighty-third plenary meeting; Resolution 217(A)(III) of the United Nations General Assembly, December 10, 1948

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whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

**Article 3**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

**Article 4**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 5**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

**Article 6**

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

**Article 7**

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

**Article 8**

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

**Article 9**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

**Article 10**

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

**Article 11**

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.

2. No one shall be held guilty without any limitation due to race, of any penal offence on account of nationality or religion, have the any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed

**Article 12**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 13**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

**Article 14**

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 15**

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor be denied the right to change his nationality.

**Article 16**

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

**Article 17**

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

**Article 18**

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

**Article 19**

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

**Article 20**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

**Article 21**

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

**Article 22**

1. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

**Article 23**

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration insuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

**Article 24**

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

**Article 25**

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

**Article 26**

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

**Article 27**

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

**Article 28**

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

**Article 29**

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 30**

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

## APPENDIX B

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### INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

and

### THE DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

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### INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

#### Preamble

*The States Parties to the present Covenant,*<sup>1</sup>

*Considering* that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world;

*Recognizing* that these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person;

*Recognizing* that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights, as well as his economic, social and cultural rights;

*Considering* the obligation of States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms;

*Realizing* that the individual, having duties to other individuals and to the community to which he belongs, is under a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized in the present Covenant;

Agree upon the following articles:

#### PART I

##### Article 1

1. All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

2. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966.

Entry into force 23 March 1976, in accordance with Article 49

3. The States Parties to the present Covenant, including those having responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

## **PART II**

### ***Article 2***

1. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

2. Where not already provided for by existing legislative or other measures, each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take the necessary steps, in accordance with its constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Covenant, to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the present Covenant.

3. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes:

(a) To ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;

(b) To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy;

(c) To ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce such remedies when granted.

### ***Article 3***

The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant.

### ***Article 4***

1. In time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, the States Parties to the present Covenant may take measures derogating from their obligations under the present Covenant to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin.

2. No derogation from articles 6, 7, 8 (paragraphs I and 2), 11, 15, 16 and 18 may be made under this provision.

3. Any State Party to the present Covenant availing itself of the right of derogation shall immediately inform the other States Parties to the present Covenant, through the intermediary of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, of the provisions from which it has derogated and of the reasons by which it was actuated. A further communication shall be made, through the same intermediary, on the date on which it terminates such derogation.

### ***Article 5***

1. Nothing in the present Covenant may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms recognized herein or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the present Covenant.

2. There shall be no restriction upon or derogation from any of the fundamental human rights recognized or existing in any State Party to the present Covenant pursuant to law, conventions, regulations or custom on the pretext that the present Covenant does not recognize such rights or that it recognizes them to a lesser extent.

**PART III****Article 6**

1. Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.

2. In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime and not contrary to the provisions of the present Covenant and to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court.

3. When deprivation of life constitutes the crime of genocide, it is understood that nothing in this article shall authorize any State Party to the present Covenant to derogate in any way from any obligation assumed under the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

4. Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence. Amnesty, pardon or commutation of the sentence of death may be granted in all cases.

5. Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age and shall not be carried out on pregnant women.

6. Nothing in this article shall be invoked to delay or to prevent the abolition of capital punishment by any State Party to the present Covenant.

**Article 7**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.

**Article 8**

1. No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited.

2. No one shall be held in servitude.

3. (a) No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour;

(b) Paragraph 3 (a) shall not be held to preclude, in countries where imprisonment with hard labour may be imposed as a punishment for a crime, the performance of hard labour in pursuance of a sentence to such punishment by a competent court;

(c) For the purpose of this paragraph the term "forced or compulsory labour" shall not include:

(i) Any work or service, not referred to in subparagraph (b), normally required of a person who is under detention in consequence of a lawful order of a court, or of a person during conditional release from such detention;

(ii) Any service of a military character and, in countries where conscientious objection is recognized, any national service required by law of conscientious objectors;

(iii) Any service exacted in cases of emergency or calamity threatening the life or well-being of the community;

(iv) Any work or service which forms part of normal civil obligations.

**Article 9**

1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.

2. Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him.

3. Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release. It shall not be the general rule that persons awaiting trial shall be detained in custody, but release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial, at any other stage of the judicial proceedings, and, should occasion arise, for execution of the judgement.

4. Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful.

5. Anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation.

#### **Article 10**

1. All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

2. (a) Accused persons shall, save in exceptional circumstances, be segregated from convicted persons and shall be subject to separate treatment appropriate to their status as unconvicted persons;

(b) Accused juvenile persons shall be separated from adults and brought as speedily as possible for adjudication. 3. The penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation. Juvenile offenders shall be segregated from adults and be accorded treatment appropriate to their age and legal status.

#### **Article 11**

No one shall be imprisoned merely on the ground of inability to fulfil a contractual obligation.

#### **Article 12**

1. Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.

2. Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.

3. The above-mentioned rights shall not be subject to any restrictions except those which are provided by law, are necessary to protect national security, public order (ordre public), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others, and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Covenant.

4. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country.

#### **Article 13**

An alien lawfully in the territory of a State Party to the present Covenant may be expelled therefrom only in pursuance of a decision reached in accordance with law and shall, except where compelling reasons of national security otherwise require, be allowed to submit the reasons against his expulsion and to have his case reviewed by, and be represented for the purpose before, the competent authority or a person or persons especially designated by the competent authority.

#### **Article 14**

1. All persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, or of his rights and obligations in a suit at law, everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. The press and the public may be excluded from all or part of a trial for reasons of morals, public order (ordre public) or national security in a democratic society, or when the interest of the private lives of the parties so requires, or to the extent strictly necessary in the opinion of the court in special circumstances where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice; but any judgement rendered in a criminal case or in a suit at law shall be made public except where the interest of juvenile persons otherwise requires or the proceedings concern matrimonial disputes or the guardianship of children.

2. Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.

3. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, everyone shall be entitled to the following minimum guarantees, in full equality:

(a) To be informed promptly and in detail in a language which he understands of the nature and cause of the charge against him;

(b) To have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing;

(c) To be tried without undue delay;

(d) To be tried in his presence, and to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing; to be informed, if he does not have legal assistance, of this right; and to have legal assistance assigned to him, in any case where the interests of justice so require, and without payment by him in any such case if he does not have sufficient means to pay for it;



(e) To examine, or have examined, the witnesses against him and to obtain the attendance and examination of witnesses on his behalf under the same conditions as witnesses against him;

(f) To have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court;

(g) Not to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt.

4. In the case of juvenile persons, the procedure shall be such as will take account of their age and the desirability of promoting their rehabilitation.

5. Everyone convicted of a crime shall have the right to his conviction and sentence being reviewed by a higher tribunal according to law.

6. When a person has by a final decision been convicted of a criminal offence and when subsequently his conviction has been reversed or he has been pardoned on the ground that a new or newly discovered fact shows conclusively that there has been a miscarriage of justice, the person who has suffered punishment as a result of such conviction shall be compensated according to law, unless it is proved that the non-disclosure of the unknown fact in time is wholly or partly attributable to him.

7. No one shall be liable to be tried or punished again for an offence for which he has already been finally convicted or acquitted in accordance with the law and penal procedure of each country.

#### **Article 15**

1. No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time when the criminal offence was committed. If, subsequent to the commission of the offence, provision is made by law for the imposition of the lighter penalty, the offender shall benefit thereby.

2. Nothing in this article shall prejudice the trial and punishment of any person for any act or omission which, at the time when it was committed, was criminal according to the general principles of law recognized by the community of nations.

#### **Article 16**

Everyone shall have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

#### **Article 17**

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

#### **Article 18**

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

#### **Article 19**

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
- (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
  - (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

#### ***Article 20***

- 1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.
- 2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

#### ***Article 21***

The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

#### ***Article 22***

- 1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
- 2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on members of the armed forces and of the police in their exercise of this right.
- 3. Nothing in this article shall authorize States Parties to the International Labour Organization Convention of 1948 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize to take legislative measures which would prejudice, or to apply the law in such a manner as to prejudice, the guarantees provided for in that Convention.

#### ***Article 23***

- 1. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.
- 2. The right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized.
- 3. No marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- 4. States Parties to the present Covenant shall take appropriate steps to ensure equality of rights and responsibilities of spouses as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. In the case of dissolution, provision shall be made for the necessary protection of any children.

#### ***Article 24***

- 1. Every child shall have, without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.
- 2. Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name.
- 3. Every child has the right to acquire a nationality.

#### ***Article 25***

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

- (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;

(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

#### **Article 26**

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

#### **Article 27**

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

### **PART IV**

#### **Article 28**

1. There shall be established a Human Rights Committee (hereafter referred to in the present Covenant as the Committee). It shall consist of eighteen members and shall carry out the functions hereinafter provided.

2. The Committee shall be composed of nationals of the States Parties to the present Covenant who shall be persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights, consideration being given to the usefulness of the participation of some persons having legal experience.

3. The members of the Committee shall be elected and shall serve in their personal capacity.

#### **Article 29**

1. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons possessing the qualifications prescribed in article 28 and nominated for the purpose by the States Parties to the present Covenant.

2. Each State Party to the present Covenant may nominate not more than two persons. These persons shall be nationals of the nominating State.

3. A person shall be eligible for renomination.

#### **Article 30**

1. The initial election shall be held no later than six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Covenant.

2. At least four months before the date of each election to the Committee, other than an election to fill a vacancy declared in accordance with article 34, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a written invitation to the States Parties to the present Covenant to submit their nominations for membership of the Committee within three months.

3. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of all the persons thus nominated, with an indication of the States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties to the present Covenant no later than one month before the date of each election.

4. Elections of the members of the Committee shall be held at a meeting of the States Parties to the present Covenant convened by the Secretary General of the United Nations at the Headquarters of the United Nations. At that meeting, for which two thirds of the States Parties to the present Covenant shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those nominees who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.

#### **Article 31**

1. The Committee may not include more than one national of the same State.

2. In the election of the Committee, consideration shall be given to equitable geographical distribution of membership and to the representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems.

**Article 32**

1. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. They shall be eligible for re-election if renominated. However, the terms of nine of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election, the names of these nine members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the meeting referred to in article 30, paragraph 4.

2. Elections at the expiry of office shall be held in accordance with the preceding articles of this part of the present Covenant.

**Article 33**

1. If, in the unanimous opinion of the other members, a member of the Committee has ceased to carry out his functions for any cause other than absence of a temporary character, the Chairman of the Committee shall notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then declare the seat of that member to be vacant.

2. In the event of the death or the resignation of a member of the Committee, the Chairman shall immediately notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall declare the seat vacant from the date of death or the date on which the resignation takes effect.

**Article 34**

1. When a vacancy is declared in accordance with article 33 and if the term of office of the member to be replaced does not expire within six months of the declaration of the vacancy, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify each of the States Parties to the present Covenant, which may within two months submit nominations in accordance with article 29 for the purpose of filling the vacancy.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of the persons thus nominated and shall submit it to the States Parties to the present Covenant. The election to fill the vacancy shall then take place in accordance with the relevant provisions of this part of the present Covenant.

3. A member of the Committee elected to fill a vacancy declared in accordance with article 33 shall hold office for the remainder of the term of the member who vacated the seat on the Committee under the provisions of that article.

**Article 35**

The members of the Committee shall, with the approval of the General Assembly of the United Nations, receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the General Assembly may decide, having regard to the importance of the Committee's responsibilities.

**Article 36**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Covenant.

**Article 37**

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall convene the initial meeting of the Committee at the Headquarters of the United Nations.

2. After its initial meeting, the Committee shall meet at such times as shall be provided in its rules of procedure.

3. The Committee shall normally meet at the Headquarters of the United Nations or at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

**Article 38**

Every member of the Committee shall, before taking up his duties, make a solemn declaration in open committee that he will perform his functions impartially and conscientiously.

**Article 39**

1. The Committee shall elect its officers for a term of two years. They may be re-elected.

2. The Committee shall establish its own rules of procedure, but these rules shall provide, inter alia, that:

- (a) Twelve members shall constitute a quorum;
- (b) Decisions of the Committee shall be made by a majority vote of the members present.

#### **Article 40**

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to submit reports on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized herein and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights:

(a) Within one year of the entry into force of the present Covenant for the States Parties concerned;

(b) Thereafter whenever the Committee so requests.

2. All reports shall be submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall transmit them to the Committee for consideration. Reports shall indicate the factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the implementation of the present Covenant.

3. The Secretary-General of the United Nations may, after consultation with the Committee, transmit to the specialized agencies concerned copies of such parts of the reports as may fall within their field of competence.

4. The Committee shall study the reports submitted by the States Parties to the present Covenant. It shall transmit its reports, and such general comments as it may consider appropriate, to the States Parties. The Committee may also transmit to the Economic and Social Council these comments along with the copies of the reports it has received from States Parties to the present Covenant.

5. The States Parties to the present Covenant may submit to the Committee observations on any comments that may be made in accordance with paragraph 4 of this article.

#### **Article 41**

1. A State Party to the present Covenant may at any time declare under this article that it recognizes the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications to the effect that a State Party claims that another State Party is not fulfilling its obligations under the present Covenant. Communications under this article may be received and considered only if submitted by a State Party which has made a declaration recognizing in regard to itself the competence of the Committee. No communication shall be received by the Committee if it concerns a State Party which has not made such a declaration. Communications received under this article shall be dealt with in accordance with the following procedure:

(a) If a State Party to the present Covenant considers that another State Party is not giving effect to the provisions of the present Covenant, it may, by written communication, bring the matter to the attention of that State Party. Within three months after the receipt of the communication the receiving State shall afford the State which sent the communication an explanation, or any other statement in writing clarifying the matter which should include, to the extent possible and pertinent, reference to domestic procedures and remedies taken, pending, or available in the matter;

(b) If the matter is not adjusted to the satisfaction of both States Parties concerned within six months after the receipt by the receiving State of the initial communication, either State shall have the right to refer the matter to the Committee, by notice given to the Committee and to the other State;

(c) The Committee shall deal with a matter referred to it only after it has ascertained that all available domestic remedies have been invoked and exhausted in the matter, in conformity with the generally recognized principles of international law. This shall not be the rule where the application of the remedies is unreasonably prolonged;

(d) The Committee shall hold closed meetings when examining communications under this article;

(e) Subject to the provisions of subparagraph (c), the Committee shall make available its good offices to the States Parties concerned with a view to a friendly solution of the matter on the basis of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the present Covenant;

(f) In any matter referred to it, the Committee may call upon the States Parties concerned, referred to in subparagraph (b), to supply any relevant information;

(g) The States Parties concerned, referred to in subparagraph (b), shall have the right to be represented when the matter is being considered in the Committee and to make submissions orally and/or in writing;

(h) The Committee shall, within twelve months after the date of receipt of notice under subparagraph (b), submit a report:

(i) If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (e) is reached, the Committee shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts and of the solution reached;

(ii) If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (e) is not reached, the Committee shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts; the written submissions and record of the oral submissions made by the States Parties concerned shall be attached to the report. In every matter, the report shall be communicated to the States Parties concerned.

2. The provisions of this article shall come into force when ten States Parties to the present Covenant have made declarations under paragraph I of this article. Such declarations shall be deposited by the States Parties with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall transmit copies thereof to the other States Parties. A declaration may be withdrawn at any time by notification to the Secretary-General. Such a withdrawal shall not prejudice the consideration of any matter which is the subject of a communication already transmitted under this article; no further communication by any State Party shall be received after the notification of withdrawal of the declaration has been received by the Secretary-General, unless the State Party concerned has made a new declaration.

#### **Article 42**

1. (a) If a matter referred to the Committee in accordance with article 41 is not resolved to the satisfaction of the States Parties concerned, the Committee may, with the prior consent of the States Parties concerned, appoint an ad hoc Conciliation Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission). The good offices of the Commission shall be made available to the States Parties concerned with a view to an amicable solution of the matter on the basis of respect for the present Covenant;

(b) The Commission shall consist of five persons acceptable to the States Parties concerned. If the States Parties concerned fail to reach agreement within three months on all or part of the composition of the Commission, the members of the Commission concerning whom no agreement has been reached shall be elected by secret ballot by a two-thirds majority vote of the Committee from among its members.

2. The members of the Commission shall serve in their personal capacity. They shall not be nationals of the States Parties concerned, or of a State not Party to the present Covenant, or of a State Party which has not made a declaration under article 41.

3. The Commission shall elect its own Chairman and adopt its own rules of procedure.

4. The meetings of the Commission shall normally be held at the Headquarters of the United Nations or at the United Nations Office at Geneva. However, they may be held at such other convenient places as the Commission may determine in consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the States Parties concerned.

5. The secretariat provided in accordance with article 36 shall also service the commissions appointed under this article.

6. The information received and collated by the Committee shall be made available to the Commission and the Commission may call upon the States Parties concerned to supply any other relevant information. 7. When the Commission has fully considered the matter, but in any event not later than twelve months after having been seized of the matter, it shall submit to the Chairman of the Committee a report for communication to the States Parties concerned:

(a) If the Commission is unable to complete its consideration of the matter within twelve months, it shall confine its report to a brief statement of the status of its consideration of the matter;

(b) If an amicable solution to the matter on the basis of respect for human rights as recognized in the present Covenant is reached, the Commission shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts and of the solution reached;

(c) If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (b) is not reached, the Commission's report shall embody its findings on all questions of fact relevant to the issues between the States Parties concerned, and its views on the possibilities of an amicable solution of the matter. This report shall also contain the written submissions and a record of the oral submissions made by the States Parties concerned;

(d) If the Commission's report is submitted under subparagraph (c), the States Parties concerned shall, within three months of the receipt of the report,

notify the Chairman of the Committee whether or not they accept the contents of the report of the Commission.

8. The provisions of this article are without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Committee under article 41.

9. The States Parties concerned shall share equally all the expenses of the members of the Commission in accordance with estimates to be provided by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

10. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall be empowered to pay the expenses of the members of the Commission, if necessary, before reimbursement by the States Parties concerned, in accordance with paragraph 9 of this article.

#### ***Article 43***

The members of the Committee, and of the ad hoc conciliation commissions which may be appointed under article 42, shall be entitled to the facilities, privileges and immunities of experts on mission for the United Nations as laid down in the relevant sections of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

#### ***Article 44***

The provisions for the implementation of the present Covenant shall apply without prejudice to the procedures prescribed in the field of human rights by or under the constituent instruments and the conventions of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies and shall not prevent the States Parties to the present Covenant from having recourse to other procedures for settling a dispute in accordance with general or special international agreements in force between them.

#### ***Article 45***

The Committee shall submit to the General Assembly of the United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council, an annual report on its activities.

### **PART V**

#### ***Article 46***

Nothing in the present Covenant shall be interpreted as impairing the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of the constitutions of the specialized agencies which define the respective responsibilities of the various organs of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies in regard to the matters dealt with in the present Covenant.

#### ***Article 47***

Nothing in the present Covenant shall be interpreted as impairing the inherent right of all peoples to enjoy and utilize fully and freely their natural wealth and resources.

### **PART VI**

#### ***Article 48***

1. The present Covenant is open for signature by any State Member of the United Nations or member of any of its specialized agencies, by any State Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, and by any other State which has been invited by the General Assembly of the United Nations to become a Party to the present Covenant.

2. The present Covenant is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

3. The present Covenant shall be open to accession by any State referred to in paragraph 1 of this article.

4. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

5. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall inform all States which have signed this Covenant or acceded to it of the deposit of each instrument of ratification or accession.

**Article 49**

1. The present Covenant shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the thirty-fifth instrument of ratification or instrument of accession.

2. For each State ratifying the present Covenant or acceding to it after the deposit of the thirty-fifth instrument of ratification or instrument of accession, the present Covenant shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or instrument of accession.

**Article 50**

The provisions of the present Covenant shall extend to all parts of federal States without any limitations or exceptions.

**Article 51**

1. Any State Party to the present Covenant may propose an amendment and file it with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall thereupon communicate any proposed amendments to the States Parties to the present Covenant with a request that they notify him whether they favour a conference of States Parties for the purpose of considering and voting upon the proposals. In the event that at least one third of the States Parties favours such a conference, the Secretary-General shall convene the conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Any amendment adopted by a majority of the States Parties present and voting at the conference shall be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for approval.

2. Amendments shall come into force when they have been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations and accepted by a two-thirds majority of the States Parties to the present Covenant in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. 3. When amendments come into force, they shall be binding on those States Parties which have accepted them, other States Parties still being bound by the provisions of the present Covenant and any earlier amendment which they have accepted.

**Article 52**

Irrespective of the notifications made under article 48, paragraph 5, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall inform all States referred to in paragraph I of the same article of the following particulars:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions under article 48;
- (b) The date of the entry into force of the present Covenant under article 49 and the date of the entry into force of any amendments under article 51.

**Article 53**

1. The present Covenant, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit certified copies of the present Covenant to all States referred to in article 48.

## **DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF**

***The General Assembly***<sup>1</sup>

*Considering* that one of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations is that of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, and that all Member States have pledged themselves to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organization to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion;

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<sup>1</sup> Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981.



*Considering* that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights proclaim the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief;

*Considering* that the disregard and infringement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or whatever belief, have brought, directly or indirectly, wars and great suffering to mankind, especially where they serve as a means of foreign interference in the internal affairs of other States and amount to kindling hatred between peoples and nations;

*Considering* that religion or belief, for anyone who professes either, is one of the fundamental elements in his conception of life and that freedom of religion or belief should be fully respected and guaranteed;

*Considering* that it is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief and to ensure that the use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, other relevant instruments of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the present Declaration is inadmissible;

*Convinced* that freedom of religion and belief should also contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism and racial discrimination;

*Noting* with satisfaction the adoption of several, and the coming into force of some, conventions, under the aegis of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies, for the elimination of various forms of discrimination;

*Concerned* by manifestations of intolerance and by the existence of discrimination in matters of religion or belief still in evidence in some areas of the world;

*Resolved* to adopt all necessary measures for the speedy elimination of such intolerance in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat discrimination on the ground of religion or belief,

*Proclaims* this Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief:

#### **Article 1**

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

#### **Article 2**

1. No one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on the grounds of religion or other belief.

2. For the purposes of the present Declaration, the expression "intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief" means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.

#### **Article 3**

Discrimination between human being on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enunciated in detail in the International Covenants on Human Rights, and as an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations.

**Article 4**

1. All States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life.

2. All States shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or other beliefs in this matter.

**Article 5**

1. The parents or, as the case may be, the legal guardians of the child have the right to organize the life within the family in accordance with their religion or belief and bearing in mind the moral education in which they believe the child should be brought up.

2. Every child shall enjoy the right to have access to education in the matter of religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of his parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, and shall not be compelled to receive teaching on religion or belief against the wishes of his parents or legal guardians, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.

3. The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the ground of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion or belief of others, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.

4. In the case of a child who is not under the care either of his parents or of legal guardians, due account shall be taken of their expressed wishes or of any other proof of their wishes in the matter of religion or belief, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle. 5. Practices of a religion or belief in which a child is brought up must not be injurious to his physical or mental health or to his full development, taking into account article 1, paragraph 3, of the present Declaration.

**Article 6**

In accordance with article I of the present Declaration, and subject to the provisions of article 1, paragraph 3, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include, inter alia, the following freedoms:

(a) To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;

(b) To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;

(c) To make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;

(d) To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas;

(e) To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes;

(f) To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions;

(g) To train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirements and standards of any religion or belief;

(h) To observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one's religion or belief;

(i) To establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion and belief at the national and international levels.

**Article 7**

The rights and freedoms set forth in the present Declaration shall be accorded in national legislation in such a manner that everyone shall be able to avail himself of such rights and freedoms in practice.

**Article 8**

Nothing in the present Declaration shall be construed as restricting or derogating from any right defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights.

## **APPENDIX C**

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### **TRAINING AT THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT**

#### **I. Summary of Major Developments**

Since the first report on International Religious Freedom was issued in September 1999, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has worked continuously with the Office of International Religious Freedom (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor) in implementing H.R. 2431. The result of this cooperation has been the further integration of religious freedom issues into the regular curriculum at FSI. During the period covered by this report, members of the FSI training staff took part in numerous conferences dealing with religious freedom, persecution, conflict, and reconciliation hosted by academic institutions, think tanks and nongovernmental organizations. In addition, the Director of FSI's Political Training Division has worked with the staff of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to ensure that their insights are reflected in FSI's course offerings. In all these ways, the staff at FSI have sought to bolster their own skills on religious freedom issues.

#### **II. Courses Offered**

The School of Professional and Area Studies (SPAS) at FSI offers training relevant to the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) in a variety of courses. Following are brief descriptions of courses offered by the divisions of Political Training, Orientation, Consular Training, and Area Studies:

##### **FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER ORIENTATION (A-100)**

Every new Foreign Service Officer takes a 7-week orientation course to prepare for an initial assignment overseas and to obtain the grounding needed for a successful foreign service career. For a wide range of emerging policy issues the students are broken down into groups of about five to six students to engage in research on the topic and then make an hour-long presentation to classmates, which includes a question and answer session. The Political Training Division briefs the students who are selected to work on religious freedom issues, identifies initial contacts for them to make, and provides them with the research materials described in Section III below. These students routinely visit the office of International Religious Freedom to discuss its work, and the issue of religious freedom as an element of U.S. foreign policy. The Political Training staff monitors the work of the religious freedom group to ensure that key points related to IRFA are covered appropriately.

##### **POLITICAL TRADECRAFT (PP-202) AND POLITICAL ECONOMIC TRADECRAFT (PG-140)**

Each of these two basic 3-week-long courses is offered three times per year. The students are full time government employees (mostly State Department Foreign Service officers) being assigned for the first time to work in an embassy's or consulate's political, economic, or combined political/economic section overseas. These are essentially required courses, in that State Department officers are assigned to take these courses by the personnel system and exceptions are rare. The State Department expects that a large proportion of these officers/students during their careers will be directly responsible for preparing their post's human rights and religious freedom reports. Therefore, these two courses provide training to one of the major classes of officers identified in the IRFA.

In these courses, each student is provided with a course notebook that contains the items listed in Section III. In addition the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor provides at least a halfday session during which religious freedom issues

are featured prominently, together with other important human rights issues in a discussion led by the office of International Religious Freedom. There is also usually a segment that includes a discussion of religious persecution, religious identity, and religious reconciliation as important factors in contemporary international conflicts. Religious freedom issues also are covered in a major segment of the course related to doing contact work overseas.

#### GLOBAL ISSUES (PP-510)

This 3-day course is given twice a year and is geared toward mid-level foreign affairs and national security professionals working for the Department of State and other agencies. In the fall, this course is combined with a separate module on human rights.

In these courses students are provided with a course notebook that contains the items listed in Section III. As in the Tradecraft courses, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor provides a full-day session during which Religious freedom issues are prominently featured in a discussion led by the office of International Religious Freedom, together with other aspects of U.S. human rights policy. The importance of religious issues in the modern world also is raised in several of the other segments, including one devoted to U.S. foreign policy priorities and strategic planning.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT—DIPLOMACY (PP-517)

This 3-day course focuses on various aspects of international conflict, especially the enhancement of skills needed to analyze the causes of conflict and develop a plan for preventive diplomacy. This course trains up to 25 mid-level foreign affairs and national security professionals working for the Department of State and other agencies.

The students are provided with a course notebook that contains most of the key documents listed in Section III. Multiple segments in this course deal with religious persecution and identity as a factor in ethnic conflict, and reconciliation as a potential preventive step.

#### BASIC CONSULAR COURSE (PC-530)

PC-530 serves as the prerequisite for obtaining a consular commission. It is aimed at junior foreign services officers preparing to go overseas to fill consular positions, dependents of U. S. government employees who will work as consular associates overseas, and domestic employees of the Bureau of Consular Affairs in order that they may serve temporary duty as consular officers should the need arise.

The PC-530 schedule includes a lecture related to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), "Working with INS," that incorporates discussion of refugee and asylum issues as these pertain to consular officers. The subject also is covered in further detail in the Self-Instructional Guide (SIG) on immigrant visa processing, which includes a chapter on "Refugees, Asylum, Walk-ins, and Parole." This chapter describes the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee criteria, the U.S. refugee program, and processing requirements for refugees. Scenarios involving religious minorities have been incorporated into the "role play" portion of the training on consular prison visits.

#### ADVANCED CONSULAR COURSE (PC-532)

The Advanced Consular Course is a 3-week course aimed at mid-level consular officers being assigned to overseas posts as first-time managers, as well as Civil Service employees of the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

This course continues routinely to include a session, organized by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), on refugee processing and policy and religious persecution; and a second session, organized by representatives of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's office of Country Reports and Asylum (DRL/CRA) on U.S. asylum law and processing. Emphasis is given to the role of a consular officer in these areas, to include processing of refugee- and asylee-following to join cases (based on approved I-730 petitions).

#### AREA STUDIES

The Foreign Service Institute and the Appeal of Conscience Foundation annually sponsor a major symposium focused on religious freedom and the role of U.S. diplomats overseas. Following keynote addresses, officers at FSI in language training and area studies courses take part in day-long sessions together with outside ex-

perts on religious issues in their region, to permit in depth exchanges and discussions.

Throughout the year, the course chairs in the Area Studies Division, in cooperation with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, take steps to ensure that their courses address both regional and country specific issues of religion, religious freedom and human rights. Participants receive substantial information encompassing the full range of issues affecting particular regions, including religious freedom and human rights, religious history and religious traditions. Students also receive reading lists (and World Wide Web guidance) that direct them to even more detailed material.

#### AMBASSADORIAL AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION TRAINING

In these courses, students are provided with a course notebook that contains the items listed in Section III. When possible the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs and/or the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor provide oral briefings on religious freedom and related human rights issues to these senior officials.

### III. Background Material on Religious Freedom

The following background materials related to religious freedom are made available to FSI students:

- Remarks by the President to Religious Leaders (June 18, 1998)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- United States Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Declaration of Independence
- Text of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998
- Department Telegram explaining the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998
- Most current Department of State telegrams on how to implement IRFA and prepare the Annual Report.
- Text of briefing by Ambassador Robert Seiple and Assistant Secretary Harold Koh on the 1999 Report on International Religious Freedom, September 9, 1999
- Appendix on Diplomatic Steps taken to implement IRFA
- *State Magazine* article on U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
- Highlights from the text of the 1999 report, plus World Wide Web site address for the entire report.
- Current and planned actions related to outreach to the domestic and worldwide Islamic community.



## APPENDIX D

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### INS AND THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is committed to ensuring that all claims for refugee and asylum protection are treated with fairness, respect, and dignity. Shortly after passage of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), the INS began to assess existing asylum and refugee training programs in order to address the specific training topics required under IRFA. In 1999 the INS formed a working group to coordinate compliance under the law, including training, development of guidelines relating to potential hostile biases, and enforcement of the new inadmissibility provision relating to foreign government officials who have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom. This appendix summarizes the agency's actions during FY 2000, as required under Section 102 (b)(1)(E) of IRFA.

#### I. Section 602(a): Training of Refugee Adjudicators

Section 602(a)(1) of IRFA amends Section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act by requiring the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to provide "all United States officials adjudicating refugee cases under this section with the same training as that provided to officers adjudicating asylum cases under section 208." This training must include "country-specific conditions, instruction on the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion, instruction on methods of religious persecution practiced in foreign countries, and applicable distinctions within a country between the nature of and treatment of various religious practices and believers."

Prior to the passage of IRFA, no specific statute or regulation governed the training of officers adjudicating refugee cases in the overseas refugee program. Refugee adjudications traditionally have been done by Immigration Officers stationed overseas who receive, in addition to basic immigration law training, specialized training consisting of a survey of refugee law and procedure, as well as in-country training. In recent years, the majority of officers detailed for specific short-term refugee-processing work have been Asylum Officers, who receive approximately 5 weeks of specialized training related to international human rights law, nonadversarial interview techniques, and other relevant national and international refugee laws and principles.<sup>1</sup>

In FY 2000, the Office of International Affairs, Asylum Division, modified the 5-week AOBTC curriculum to accommodate the IRFA training requirements for overseas officers processing refugee claims. The Asylum Division conducted two AOBTC sessions, attended by 47 new Asylum Officers and 20 overseas Immigration Officers. The overseas officers received the same training and took the same exams required of Asylum Officer with respect to asylum eligibility, fraud, credibility, and interviewing. Asylum Division and Refugee Branch personnel conducted separate trainings on job-specific aspects of asylum adjudication and refugee processing. The course also included a specific lesson devoted to IRFA and throughout the course additional emphasis was placed on religious persecution issues.

All persons who adjudicate refugee requests will continue to receive country conditions training provided primarily by the INS Resource Information Center (RIC) in

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<sup>1</sup> Asylum Officers complete an initial 5-week Immigration Officer Basic Training Course, and 5 additional weeks of the Asylum Officer Basic Training Course (AOBTC). The AOBTC, which is held approximately twice per year, includes international human rights law, asylum and refugee law, interviewing techniques, decision-making and decision-writing skills, effective country conditions research skills, and computer skills. Compulsory in-service training for all asylum officers is held weekly.

the Office of International Affairs, as well as copies of the annual Department of State report on religious freedom mandated by Section 102 of IRFA.

## **II. Section 603(b): Training of Asylum Officers Adjudicating Asylum Cases, and Immigration Officers Performing Duties under Section 235(b) of the INA (Expedited Removal)**

### ASYLUM

Asylum Officers have received focused training on claims involving religious issues since the Asylum Division's inception in 1991, and this was augmented during the last year both with basic asylum training and continuing training in the field offices. Two AOBTC classes were conducted during FY2000 in which a total of 47 new Asylum Officers and 20 overseas Immigration Officers were trained.

Local Asylum Office trainers continue to follow the current policy of including a discussion of religious persecution whenever relevant during training on country conditions. In addition all offices in FY 2000 had training specifically on religious persecution, and many of these sessions were presented by outside experts. During FY 2000 the Asylum Division continued to promote online research. Each officer now has access to the public Internet and to supplemental legal and country conditions information databases. Training in the use of these resources has been given in all offices, and examples of religious groups and religious persecution in different countries were used as exercises to conduct online research.

The RIC has published an online guide to web research on the INS Intranet, and an area was created for and devoted to government and non-government links to religious persecution websites.

The RIC in the INS Office of International Affairs serves both the Asylum Division and the Refugee Unit, and is responsible for the collection and/or production and distribution of materials regarding human rights conditions around the world. During FY 2000 the RIC has catalogued separately religious freedom periodicals and coded separately RIC responses to field queries that involve religious issues. A list of documents focused specifically on religious persecution and distributed to the asylum field offices is attached. There are also numerous reports distributed by the RIC that are country- or region-specific that do not focus on religion but which contain some information on religious persecution in that country or region.

### EXPEDITED REMOVAL/CREDIBLE FEAR

Approximately 4,500 Immigration Inspectors and 2,500 Detention and Deportation Officers may at some time be involved in the expedited removal/credible fear process and therefore are subject to the training provisions of Section 603(b). During FY 2001, the INS will conduct training on religious persecution for these officers through a combination of direct, video-taped, and computer-based instruction. The working group is conducting negotiations with a media services company to produce an IRFA training video.

During FY 2000, the INS also has presented information on IRFA and religious persecution claims to outside agencies. The Asylum Division cohosted a panel on understanding religious claims at the June 2000 national Immigration Judge conference, and provided instructional materials on IRFA and useful religious persecution website addresses. As part of that presentation, the INS presented an analysis of FY 1998 and FY 1999 statistics on new asylum requests in light of the country of origin and whether there was a religious component to these cases. This data has been used to develop additional training materials and was shared with the Department of State and the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge. The INS Office of General Counsel also has provided training at the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute. This training included an overview of asylum and refugee policy and legal issues, and specifically addressed religious persecution issues and IRFA.

### AGENCY-WIDE TRAINING ON IRFA

During FY 2000 all employees were notified of IRFA and its effect on operations within the INS. The new inadmissibility provision of INA Sec. 212(a)(2)(G) relating to foreign government officials who have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom was explained, and website addresses for more IRFA information were provided. All employees will continue to be notified concerning agency implementation of IRFA and updates to procedures and regulations.

The INS IRFA working group has advised that the best approach for providing initial training on religious freedom and persecution issues is through the expansion of basic training on asylum and human rights issues included in the officer basic



training courses. Work continues to be done with the Immigration Officer Academy and the Border Patrol Academy to incorporate additional asylum and refugee training materials, including information on religious persecution, into the basic curriculum.

#### **Section 602(c): Guidelines for Addressing Hostile Biases: Employees Hired Abroad**

Preliminary guidelines have been drafted for the hiring of personnel abroad who work in refugee-related situations, and revisions to these drafts are under discussion within the INS working group. The INS has initiated discussions with the Department of State (DOS) regarding inclusion of IRFA obligations in the standard DOS contract entered into with non-governmental agencies involved in refugee processing. We anticipate developing the guidelines more fully through consultation with overseas personnel officers and the relevant DOS components in the course of the following fiscal year.

#### **Section 603(a): Guidelines for Addressing Hostile Biases: Interpreters**

Guidelines for interpreters of conversations between aliens and Immigration Inspectors/Asylum Officers are to be developed jointly by the Department of State and the Department of Justice. In the asylum field offices, applicants for asylum currently provide their own interpreters. In the expedited removal/credible fear process, the INS provides interpreters through the use of contracted services. Officers at ports-of-entry currently employ various means of interpretation. The ports may use an Immigration Officer or the INS Interpreters' Unit in New York, if available, or they may use one of several commercial services, if funding permits. All ports-of-entry employees have been notified of the provisions of IRFA relating to use of interpreters with hostile biases, and have been advised to avoid the use of any airline interpreters whenever possible for secondary inspection. During FY 2000 officials at major ports-of-entry were queried by the INS IRFA working group, and additional queries are being developed in order to complete work on the guidelines.

A master contract between Language Services Associates and the INS was approved in July 1999, and while it currently is used only by Asylum Officers in the Asylum Pre-Screening program, the interpreter services it provides are available to other INS components. The contract has special provisions to ensure the security and confidentiality of the credible fear process, and it can be modified to include specific antibias provisions. In FY 2000 the INS procurement office has aided the Asylum Division in developing a list of language service providers contracted by the General Services Administration. This list of contractors now may be used by any division of the INS to obtain language translation and interpretation services.

#### **RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION ARTICLES DISTRIBUTED BY THE INS RESOURCE INFORMATION CENTER**

Below is a comprehensive, chronological list of the specialized documents on abuses of religious freedom distributed by the INS Resource Information Center (RIC) to the asylum offices and the Refugee Branch since 1992. They were distributed at the time they came to the attention of the RIC, which, in some cases, was one or more years after the date of publication. This list does not include hundreds of articles the RIC makes available to asylum field offices in the biweekly News Summary for Asylum Adjudicators.

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Immigration and Refugee Board Documentation Centre. *The Ahmadiyya* (Ottawa: IRBDC, June 1991), 31 p.

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Asia Watch. *Freedom of Religion in China* (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 1992), 77 p.

Immigration and Refugee Board Documentation Centre. *Pakistan: Treatment of Ahmadis Who Return* (Ottawa, IRBDC, February 1992), 16 p.

Immigration and Refugee Board, Documentation, Information, and Research Branch. *CIS, Baltic States and Georgia: Situation of Jews* (Ottawa: IRB DIRB, July 1992), 35 p.

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- U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Resource Information Center, *Egypt: Coptic Christians*, Query Response (Washington, DC: INS RIC, EGY94-01.ZNK, February 10, 1994), 4 p.
- U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Resource Information Center, Profile Series, *Russia: The Status of Jews in the Post-Soviet Era* (Washington, DC, INS RIC, PR/RUS/94.001, September 1994), 39 p.
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## APPENDIX E

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### OVERVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE POLICY

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the world's refugee population to be 11.5 million persons. Millions more are displaced within their own countries by war, famine, and civil unrest. The United States works with other governments and international and nongovernmental organizations to protect refugees, internally displaced persons, and conflict victims, and strives to ensure that survival needs for food, health care, and shelter are met. The United States has been instrumental in mobilizing a community of nations to work through these organizations to alleviate the misery and suffering of refugees throughout the world. During FY 2000, the United States has supported major relief and repatriation programs throughout the world.

In seeking durable long-term solutions for most refugees, the United States gives priority to the safe, voluntary return of refugees to their homelands. This policy, recognized in the Refugee Act of 1980, is also the preference of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the international community of nations that support refugees. If safe, voluntary repatriation is not feasible other durable solutions are sought, including resettlement in countries of asylum within the region and in other regions. Resettlement in other countries, including the United States, is appropriate for refugees in urgent need of protection and refugees for whom other durable solutions are inappropriate or unavailable.

The United States considers for admission as refugees persons of special humanitarian concern who can establish persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The legal basis of the refugee admissions program is the Refugee Act of 1980, which embodies the American tradition of granting refuge to diverse groups suffering or fearing persecution. The act adopted the definition of "refugee" contained in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Over the past decade, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has been adjusting its focus away from the large refugee admissions programs that had developed during the Cold War for nationals of Communist countries and toward more diverse refugee groups that require protection for a variety of reasons, including religious belief. The following describes the program's efforts, by region, in meeting the needs of refugees worldwide who have faced religious persecution.

#### Africa

For the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, religious freedom and peaceful coexistence are the rule, even where other conflicts hold sway. The primary exception to the rule is Sudan, where the long ongoing civil war has a religious dimension. Islam is the state religion and Muslims dominate the Government. The Government continues to restrict the activities of Christians, practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and other non-Muslims. Security forces reportedly harass and use violence regularly against persons based on their religious beliefs. In areas controlled by the Government, access to education as well as other social services, is far easier for Muslims than for Christians and non-Muslims. The Government has conducted or tolerated attacks on civilians, indiscriminate bombing raids, and slave raids on the south, all with a religious as well as an ethnic dimension.

The U.S. admissions program has in recent years increased its focus in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Kenya on these Sudanese victims of religious discrimination and repression. The refugee processing program in Cairo was expanded in 1999 with Sudanese refugees as the primary beneficiaries. Plans are well-developed to resettle in FY 2001 several thousand young Sudanese refugees now in camps in Kenya, including over 100 unaccompanied minors.

### **East Asia**

Most countries in the region permit freedom of worship. However, the religious freedom situation in China is worsening. The Government actively suppresses those groups that it cannot control directly, most notably the Vatican-affiliated (underground) Catholic Church, Protestant “house churches,” some Muslim groups, followers of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, and members of the Falun Gong spiritual movement. The Vietnamese constitution provides for freedom of worship; however, the Government restricts those organized activities of religious organizations that it defines as being at variance with state laws and policies. Most independent religious activities either are prohibited or restricted severely. For example, Buddhist monks are required to work under a party-controlled umbrella organization. The situation for some religious groups in Laos is similar. In Burma, the Government actively suppresses most non-Buddhist religions (particular in the case of minority ethnic groups such as the Karen and Chin). The religious freedom situation in North Korea is particularly hard to gauge given the extreme lack of access provided by the Government; however, most indications are that religious freedom is circumscribed severely.

The U.S. admissions program for East Asia accepts refugee cases referred by the UNHCR and U.S. embassies. Over the past several years, we have worked closely with the UNHCR to strengthen the referral process so those individuals in need of resettlement can have access to the program.

### **Eastern Europe**

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, freedom of religion varies widely in the countries of the Newly Independent States and the Baltics. Most states regulate religious groups and activities, specifying a set of “traditional” religions with certain privileges denied to other groups. Following the example of Russia in 1997, many states responded with more restrictive legislation to govern the activities of foreign missionaries. Registration in many cases is required not only to establish a group as a legal entity, which allows it to rent or own space, but even in some cases, to ensure a group’s right to hold services. In most countries, obstruction or delay of registration, usually by local officials, continues to frustrate some denominations perceived as “foreign” or as “cults.” In some countries, one’s faith may be associated with ethnicity, patriotism, nationalism, or even with terrorism; in some cases authorities are suspicious of religious groups perceived as having political agendas and organizations.

The U.S. refugee admissions program provides resettlement opportunities to religious minority members (as identified in the Lautenberg Amendment) with close family ties to the United States. In addition, UNHCR has recently increased the number of referrals to the program.

Refugee admissions on religious grounds have been significant factors in both the Bosnia and Kosovo resettlement efforts. The U.S. refugee admissions program has provided protection to Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians, as well as individuals of other religious minorities. We will continue to work with the UNHCR, faith-based nongovernmental organizations, human rights groups, and U.S. missions to identify persons who qualify under the 1980 act on religious grounds for whom resettlement is appropriate.

### **Latin America/Caribbean**

In Latin America generally, religious freedom is widely recognized and enjoyed. The key exception is Cuba, where the Government engages in active efforts to monitor and control religious institutions, including surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of clergy and members; evictions from and confiscation of places of worship; and preventive detention of religious activists. It also uses registration as a mechanism of control; by refusing to register new denominations, it makes them vulnerable to charges of illegal association. However, despite these obstacles to religious expression, church attendance has grown in recent years.

The U.S. refugee admissions program specifically includes religious minorities and other human rights activists among the list of eligible groups.

### **Near East and South Asia**

Repression of religious minorities is common in some countries in the Middle East and South Asia. In Pakistan discriminatory legislation has encouraged an atmosphere of violence, which has led to acts by extremists against religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, and Zikris. In India state and local authori-



ties' responses to extremist violence were often inadequate. In Saudi Arabia public non-Muslim worship is a criminal offense, as is conversion of a Muslim to another religion. In Iran members of minority religions continue to face arrest, harassment, and discrimination.

Iranian refugees who belong to religious minorities (Baha'is, Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians) are able to apply directly for U.S. resettlement. In addition, the UNHCR and U.S. embassies in the region facilitate access to the admissions program for individuals of other nationalities who may qualify on religious grounds. We will continue efforts to improve access to refugee processing through dialogue with faith-based nongovernmental organizations and human rights groups who may identify victims with valid claims based on grounds of religious persecution. The UNHCR also has addressed religious persecution issues in several regional workshops to increase the sensitivity of protection and resettlement officers to victims of religious persecution.

