

ANDORRA 2016 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for freedom of individuals to manifest their religion or belief and prohibits religious discrimination. In accordance with the constitution, the government continued to offer the Catholic Church privileges not available to other religious groups. Following enactment in August of a regulation to protect animals at the time of slaughter, halal butchery continued to be permitted as long as it was carried out under veterinary supervision at the country's slaughterhouse. Some Muslims expressed concerns individuals wearing head coverings for religious reasons had to remove them in photographs for official documents. In September the government held initial meetings with the Jewish and Muslim communities to discuss the possible construction of a cemetery where they could conduct burials in accordance with their religious beliefs and customs. Non-Catholic foreigners performing religious functions could not obtain permits for their religious work and had to enter the country under a different status, but could perform religious work unhindered.

The Catholic Church of Santa Maria del Fener in Andorra la Vella lent its sanctuary twice a month to the Anglican community so that visiting Anglican clergy could conduct services for the English-speaking community.

During periodic visits, the U.S. Ambassador, resident in Spain, and the Consul General and other officials from the U.S. Consulate General in Barcelona discussed with senior government representatives and civil society leaders issues such as the lack of official status for faiths other than Catholicism and the lack of cemeteries for the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 86,000 (July 2016 estimate). There are no statistics on the size of religious groups or census data on religious group membership. The majority of the population is Roman Catholic. Smaller religious groups include Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Anglicans, Seventh-day Adventists, Bahais, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), the New Apostolic Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Muslim community, of which the large majority is immigrant, has grown in recent years. Muslim

leaders estimate the community has 800-2,000 members. The Jewish community reports it has approximately 100 members.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution “guarantees freedom of ideas, religion, and cult.” It prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion and stipulates no one shall be required to disclose his or her religion or beliefs. The constitution states such freedoms may be limited only to protect public safety, order, health, or morals as prescribed by law or to protect the rights of others. The constitution acknowledges a special relationship with the Catholic Church “in accordance with Andorran tradition” and recognizes the “full legal capacity” of the bodies of the Catholic Church, granting them legal status “in accordance with their own rules.” One of two constitutionally designated princes of the country (who serves equally as joint head of state with the other prince, the President of France) is the Catholic Bishop of Urgell, Joan Enric Vives i Sicilia, whose diocese in Spain includes Andorra.

Faiths other than Catholicism do not have legal status as religious groups. The government registers religious communities as cultural organizations under the law of associations, which does not specifically mention religious groups. To build a place of worship or seek government financial support for community activities, a religious group must register as a nonprofit cultural organization and acquire legal status. To register, a group must provide its statutes and foundational agreement, a statement certifying the names of persons appointed to the board or other official positions in the organization, and a patrimony declaration that identifies the inheritance or endowment of the organization. A consolidated register of associations records all types of associations, including religious groups. The law governing the issuance of official documents such as residence permits, passports, and driver’s licenses, requires individuals to appear and be photographed with their heads uncovered.

According to the law, municipalities are responsible for the construction, preservation, and administration of cemeteries and funerary services.

In August the government approved a regulation on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing. Halal slaughter is permitted so long as it takes place under the supervision of the veterinary services of the country’s slaughterhouse.

Instruction in the Catholic faith is optional in public schools. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the government pays their salaries. The Ministry of Education also provides space in the public schools where the religion classes are taught.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

The Catholic Church continued to receive special privileges not available to other religious groups. The government paid the salaries of the eight Catholic priests serving in local churches and granted all foreign Catholic priests citizenship for as long as they exercised their functions in the country.

In September the government held initial meetings with the Jewish and Muslim communities to discuss the possible construction of a cemetery where they could conduct burials in accordance with their religious beliefs and customs. Although these communities could bury their dead in existing cemeteries, municipalities did not allocate separate burial areas in those cemeteries, or land for separate cemeteries, for use by the Jewish and Muslim communities. As a result, these communities generally buried their dead outside the country. The Jewish community, for example, used cemeteries in Toulouse, France, and Barcelona, Spain. The Muslim community tended to use cemeteries in Toulouse, France, or repatriate its dead and bury them in their countries of origin.

According to the prosecutor's office, a 2014 assault by two individuals of a Jew outside of a discotheque in the city of La Massana remained under investigation.

The government continued to fund three Catholic schools at the primary and secondary level.

Foreigners performing religious functions for religious groups other than the Catholic Church could not obtain religious working permits because the law did not define what constituted a "religious worker." These workers had to enter the country under a different status. Foreign religious workers could enter the country with permits for other positions such as schoolteachers or business workers and were able to carry out religious work without hindrance.

Members of the Muslim community again raised concerns that individuals wearing head coverings for religious reasons could not remain covered in photographs for official documents.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There continued to be no mosque in the country, but there were two Muslim prayer rooms. The Catholic Church of Santa Maria del Fener in Andorra la Vella lent its sanctuary twice a month to the Anglican community so that visiting Anglican clergy could conduct services for the English-speaking community.

The Muslim community processed halal products locally throughout the year. The Jewish community continued to import kosher products, as it was too small to produce them locally.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

During periodic visits, the U.S. Ambassador to Spain, who is accredited to the country, and the Consul General and other officials from the U.S. Consulate General in Barcelona discussed concerns about the lack of cemeteries for the Jewish and Muslim communities with senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior and Justice officials. The officials stated they were exploring the possibility of building cemeteries for those communities.

Embassy officials met with representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities to discuss issues such as the lack of legal status as religious groups for faiths other than Catholicism, the implications of regulations requiring individuals to remove head coverings for official identity documents, and the lack of cemeteries for the Jewish and Muslim communities.