

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. Please provide any information about how Mormons are treated in Mongolia.**
- 2. Are the politicians and the police subjected to anti-Christian (Mormon in particular) sentiment by the 'non-believers'?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide any information about how Mormons are treated in Mongolia.**

Although the US State Department has reported that the US Embassy in Mongolia maintains regular contact with the Mormon religious group (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS)) no information was found in the sources consulted on the treatment of Mormons. However, information on the situation of Mormons in Mongolia is outlined below. (US Department of State 2005, 'U.S. Government Policy' in *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Mongolia*, 8 November – Attachment 1).

Since the end of Communist rule in 1990, missionaries in Mongolia, including Mormon, have found "a ready audience of believers". Internet sources linked to LDS missionary websites state that the first missionaries arrived in 1992 and the mission officially established in 1995. The LDS Church was said to be legally registered on 17 January 1994 and the first meeting house dedicated in Ulaanbaatar on 6 June 1999. Mormons are among the most active and visible foreign missionaries in Mongolia and offer free English lessons as a means of attracting converts (Halasz, Irja 2003, 'Mongolia's first Catholic bishop installed', *Associated Press Newswires*, 29 August – Attachment 2; 'Mongolia Ulaanbaatar' 2004, LDS Mission Network website <http://www.mission.net/mongolia/ulaanbaatar/> - Accessed 5 January 2006 – Attachment 3; 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, continued...' (undated), Adherents.com website http://www.adherents.com/Na/Na_203.html – Accessed 5 January

2006 – Attachment 4; ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, continued...’ (undated), Adherents.com website http://www.adherents.com/Na/Na_218.html – Accessed 5 January 2006 – Attachment 5; ‘Religion & Ethics/In Brief’ 2001, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 3 August – Attachment 6; Dalziel, Elizabeth 2005, ‘Impact in Mongolia; Missionaries flock to formerly Communist nation’, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 5 November – Attachment 7; Brooke, James 2005, ‘For Mongolians, E Is for English, and F Is for the Future’, *The New York Times*, 15 February – Attachment 8).

Mormon sources estimate “native” LDS membership in Mongolia at over 3,500 members (0.13% of the population). Harper, an Assistant Professor at Brigham Young University, writes there were, at the end of 2002, 21 branches in two districts. He identifies branches in Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan, Choibalsan, Zoon Hara, Muren, Erdenet, Baganuur, Nalaikh, Sukhbaatar and Khovd. There is a claim that the LDS is largest Christian denomination in Mongolia. Harper also notes that an “unusually” high rate of Mongolian converts serve missions, around 10% (Stewart, David 2001, ‘The Mongolian Miracle’, Cumorah News Service, 16 December <http://www.mission.net/mongolia/ulaanbaatar/news.php?nID=257> – Accessed 5 January 2006 – Attachment 9; Harper, Steven C. 2003, “‘Nothing Less Than Miraculous’: The First Decade of Mormonism in Mongolia”, *BYU Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1 – Attachment 10).

In the 2001 paper Stewart also stated (and sourced information to a returned missionary, Elder Jacob Lewis) on the situation of Mormons:

Tracting and street contacting are not allowed in Mongolia, and so almost all new converts are found through the efforts of existing members or through spontaneous inquiries of students in English classes taught at the high school and university levels. Getting referrals from members was never a problem, explained Elder Lewis, because members were enthusiastic to share the gospel. While most Mongolians are nominally Buddhists or Shamanists, he explained, many of the younger generation know little about their own Buddhist beliefs because of religious prohibitions during the Communist era. Because of this, they were relatively easy to teach and had few hang-ups with gospel principles...(Stewart, David 2001, ‘The Mongolian Miracle’, Cumorah News Service, 16 December <http://www.mission.net/mongolia/ulaanbaatar/news.php?nID=257> – Accessed 5 January 2006 – Attachment 9).

He continued:

Most of the church growth in Mongolia has occurred among young men and women. Elder Lewis notes serving in one branch of over 200 members where only ten members were over the age of 30. When asked whether the growth among young people was because of English-teaching programs, Elder Lewis replied: “perhaps somewhat. But mostly, that’s the age that is receptive to the gospel.” Many older individuals, he notes, are less likely to join the Church because of old habits and the sway of traditional religion. Certainly, the unique demographics of the Church in Mongolia – coupled with the high missionary enthusiasm of new members – have contributed significantly to the high rates of missionary service in Mongolia...(Stewart, David 2001, ‘The Mongolian Miracle’, Cumorah News Service, 16 December <http://www.mission.net/mongolia/ulaanbaatar/news.php?nID=257> – Accessed 5 January 2006 – Attachment 9).

And:

Some of the challenges of the Church in Mongolia center around retention, leadership, and the membership gender imbalance. Activity was approximately 50% in 1997, and substantially less at present. Many Mongolians become Christians only for a year or two, and sometimes much less, before dropping out – a trend that has been noted with concern by non-LDS Christian groups as well. Training local priesthood leadership is also a challenge, and home teaching rates in Mongolia have always been poor. There are also far more active women than men, and – recognizing that the prospects of some female members of marrying within the Church are slim – special classes have even been organized by some senior couple missionaries to train female members to convert non-LDS boyfriends or acquaintances (Stewart, David 2001, ‘The Mongolian Miracle’, Cumorah News Service, 16 December <http://www.mission.net/mongolia/ulaanbaatar/news.php?nID=257> – Accessed 5 January 2006 – Attachment 9).

Harper states that the Church “is there [in Mongolia] to stay” and in the future there is:

...Continued adjustments to a market economy, including widespread poverty, combine with other difficulties to challenge Church growth and influence. Moving from an atheistic, secular culture in which vodka and tea are staples to a pious, time-consuming religious life proves too difficult for many. The spoils of Western culture can also have adverse effects. Some converts privileged to receive education in the United States do not want to return to the comparatively austere lifestyle of their native land. Others, feeling the burden of knowing how much will be expected of them in Church service, become aloof after a period of study or mission abroad. As the Church grows rapidly, the close community of the first branch in Ulaanbaatar seems lost in the increasingly organized districts and branches, whose leaders and clerks are frustrated by Mongolians’ transient tendencies. Some early, influential converts struggle to endure when significant initial sacrifices prove to be only the beginning of covenanted discipleship (Harper, Steven C. 2003, “‘Nothing Less Than Miraculous’: The First Decade of Mormonism in Mongolia’, *BYU Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1 – Attachment 10).

2. Are the politicians and the police subjected to anti-Christian (Mormon in particular) sentiment by the ‘non-believers’?

No information was found in the sources consulted on this specific question. The following information on corruption generally in Mongolia and with respect to politicians and police is useful.

General

The National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia has reported that corruption is one of the main issues attracting attention public attention in modern Mongolian society. Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index scored Mongolia at 3.0, one of more than two-thirds of the 159 nations surveyed scoring less than 5 out of 10, indicating a serious level of corruption. (National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (undated), *Human Rights and Freedoms in Mongolia Status Report 2003*, para. 3.8 <http://www.nhrc-mn.org/docs/Annual%202003%20Status%20Report.pdf> – Accessed 23 August 2004 – Attachment 11; Transparency International 2005, ‘Transparency International – Corruption Perceptions Index 2005’, TI website, 18 October <http://www1.transparency.org/cpi/2005/2005.10.18.cpi.en.html> - Accessed 19 October – Attachment 12).

A paper on democracy in Mongolia prepared at the University of Essex identifies five main types/forms of corruption:

(1) political lobbying, including obtaining special permits, getting Government decrees issued and contracts; (2) business related, including obtaining land permits, getting advantageous conditions in privatization bids, obtaining illegal loans and nepotism; (3) crime, including importing and exporting large amounts of goods or heavily taxed items (e.g. cars, tobacco, alcohol) without taxation; (4) social status, including gaining government scholarships illicitly, entering schools without exams and avoiding military service; and (5) election and political party related corruption, including buying candidate nominations for Parliamentary elections or buying government positions (Landman, Todd, Larizza, Marco and McEvoy, Claire 2005, 'State of Democracy in Mongolia', Human Rights Centre, University of Essex, 30 June-1 July

http://www.forum.mn/res_mat/State%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Mongolia.pdf – Accessed 9 January 2006, p.34 – Attachment 13).

Politicians

The paper on democracy in Mongolia states that (researcher's emphasis in bold type):

Corruption has become an important problem for Mongolian **politics** and democratic governance. Its appearance is partly due to Mongolia's small and integrated population, influences from Russia and China, from the process of liberalisation, and from currently weak enforcement mechanisms...(Landman, Todd, Larizza, Marco and McEvoy, Claire 2005, 'State of Democracy in Mongolia', Human Rights Centre, University of Essex, 30 June-1 July

http://www.forum.mn/res_mat/State%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Mongolia.pdf – Accessed 9 January 2006, p.33 – Attachment 13).

The US State Department also reported that:

...The USG's first-hand experience with public sector corruption has included Cabinet-level officials directing donor funds to their personal property, refusing to account for donor funds, providing donor sub-contracts to close friends and relatives, and interfering with the court system when prosecution of such acts is initiated (US Department of State 2005, 'Corruption' in *2005 Investment Climate Statement – Mongolia*, February <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/ifd/2005/> - Accessed 9 January 2006 – Attachment 14).

During 2005 there were a number of protests at the level of corruption by Mongolian politicians ('Mongolian groups unite in anti-corruption protests' 2005, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, source: UB Post website, 22 December – Attachment 15; 'SCOPE: Calls for cleaner gov't growing louder in Mongolia' 2005, *Asian Political News*, 18 April – Attachment 16; 'New Mongolian NGO plans anti-graft rally 3 February' 2005, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, source: UB Post website, 3 February – Attachment 17).

Police

According to the University of Essex paper the Zorig Foundation has found that (researcher's emphasis in bold type):

...there are widespread instances of corruption among the professional classes, where

the worst forms of corruption (i.e. large sums of money being accepted) take place primarily among the **police**, judges, and tax officials...(Landman, Todd, Larizza, Marco and McEvoy, Claire 2005, 'State of Democracy in Mongolia', Human Rights Centre, University of Essex, 30 June-1 July http://www.forum.mn/res_mat/State%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Mongolia.pdf – Accessed 9 January 2006, p.34 – Attachment 13).

(Note: Information accessed from the Zorig Foundation's website states that it is a non-governmental organization whose main mission is to advance the formation of democratic society and support political reforms in Mongolia ('Zorig Foundation for Democracy' (undated), Zorig Foundation website <http://www.zorigfoundation.org.mn/English/index.html> - Accessed 11 January 2006 – Attachment 18)).

In addition, the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia has reported that various surveys constantly indicate that law enforcement agencies are highly ranked as corrupt offices (National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (undated), *Human Rights and Freedoms in Mongolia Status Report 2003*, para. 3.8.4 <http://www.nhrc-mn.org/docs/Annual%202003%20Status%20Report.pdf> – Accessed 23 August 2004 – Attachment 11).

Respondents in one survey 33.3-48.1% had answered that (researcher's emphasis in bold type):

...“the staff of court, prosecutor's office and **police** are tending to bias towards their relatives and friends, and bribing is practically inseparable from their work”... (National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (undated), *Human Rights and Freedoms in Mongolia Status Report 2003*, para.3.1 <http://www.nhrc-mn.org/docs/Annual%202003%20Status%20Report.pdf> – Accessed 23 August 2004 – Attachment 11).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

International News & Politics

Mongol Messenger <http://www.mongolmessenger.mn/home/index.php>

Mongolia Today <http://www.mongoliatoday.com/>

MongolianArtist.com <http://mongolianartist.com/art/>

UB Post <http://ubpost.mongolnews.mn/>

Topic Specific Links

Cumorah Project: International Resources for LDS Missionary Work

<http://www.cumorah.com/>

Zorig Foundation <http://www.zorigfoundation.org.mn/English/index.html>

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Library Networks

Lawrence, James, T. (ed) 2004, *Human Rights in Asia and the Pacific*, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., New York

Databases:

Public *FACTIVA*

DIMIA

BACIS

Reuters Business Briefing

Country Information

RRT	<i>REFINFO</i> <i>ISYS</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada) RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Mongolia*, 8 November.
2. Halasz, Irja 2003, 'Mongolia's first Catholic bishop installed', *Associated Press Newswires*, 29 August. (FACTIVA)
3. 'Mongolia Ulaanbaatar' 2004, LDS Mission Network website.
(<http://www.mission.net/mongolia/ulaanbaatar/> - Accessed 5 January 2006)
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7. Dalziel, Elizabeth 2005, 'Impact in Mongolia; Missionaries flock to formerly Communist nation', *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 5 November. (FACTIVA)
8. Brooke, James 2005, 'For Mongolians, E Is for English, and F Is for the Future', *The New York Times*, 15 February. (FACTIVA)
9. Stewart, David 2001, 'The Mongolian Miracle', Cumorah News Service, 16 December. (<http://www.mission.net/mongolia/ulaanbaatar/news.php?nID=257> – Accessed 5 January 2006)
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11. National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (undated), *Human Rights and Freedoms in Mongolia Status Report 2003*, paras.3.1-3.1.1.4,3.8-3.8.4.
(<http://www.nhrc-mn.org/docs/Annual%202003%20Status%20Report.pdf> – Accessed 23 August 2004)
12. Transparency International 2005, 'Transparency International – Corruption Perceptions Index 2005', TI website, 18 October.
(<http://www1.transparency.org/cpi/2005/2005.10.18.cpi.en.html> - Accessed 19 October)
13. Landman, Todd, Larizza, Marco and McEvoy, Claire 2005, 'State of Democracy in Mongolia', Human Rights Centre, University of Essex, 30 June-1 July.

http://www.forum.mn/res_mat/State%20of%20Democracy%20in%20Mongolia.pdf – Accessed 9 January 2006)

14. US Department of State 2005, 'Corruption' in *2005 Investment Climate Statement – Mongolia*, February. (<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/ifa/2005/> - Accessed 9 January 2006)
15. 'Mongolian groups unite in anti-corruption protests' 2005, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, source: UB Post website, 22 December. (FACTIVA)
16. 'SCOPE: Calls for cleaner gov't growing louder in Mongolia' 2005, *Asian Political News*, 18 April. (FACTIVA)
17. 'New Mongolian NGO plans anti-graft rally 3 February' 2005, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, source: UB Post website, 3 February. (FACTIVA)
18. 'Zorig Foundation for Democracy' (undated), Zorig Foundation website. (<http://www.zorigfoundation.org.mn/English/index.html> - Accessed 11 January 2006)