

LIECHTENSTEIN 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution stipulates everyone is free to choose his or her faith. It makes the state responsible for “protecting the religious...interests of the People” and establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion. It stipulates other religions may practice their faith within the bounds of morality and public order. There are criminal penalties for public incitement to hatred towards a religious group, religious discrimination, or “debasement” of any religion. Muslims said they remained unable to obtain local authorities’ permission to establish their own cemetery and the government had been unresponsive to their requests to build a proper mosque and denied a residency permit for a new imam. The government said it had neither received any requests for a mosque nor identified a successor imam. On January 30, government officials and the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem again held a public service to remember the victims of the Holocaust. President of Parliament Albert Frick spoke on the importance of rejecting anti-Semitism and honoring art produced during the Holocaust.

In contrast with previous years, there were no reports of statements hostile to religious minorities by members of groups considered to be extremist. A representative of the Muslim community said Muslim women suffered job discrimination because they wore headscarves.

The U.S. Embassy in Bern, Switzerland, which is responsible for diplomatic relations with the country, continued to encourage the promotion of religious freedom in discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focusing primarily on access to religious education and the establishment of religious infrastructure, such as a mosque or Muslim burial sites. Embassy staff discussed religious freedom issues, such as the extent of societal discrimination, with the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem and the state-subsidized, nonprofit Liechtenstein Institute.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 39,000 (July 2018 estimate). According to the 2015 census, religious group membership is as follows: 73.4 percent Roman Catholic, 6.3 percent Protestant Reformed, 5.9 percent Muslim, 1.2 percent Lutheran, 1.3 percent Christian Orthodox, 1.8 percent other religious groups, 7 percent no religious affiliation, and 3.3 percent unspecified.

The great majority of Muslims are Sunni, predominantly from Turkey, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. The Jewish community consists of approximately 30 individuals. Immigrants, who make up approximately one-third of the population, come mainly from Switzerland and Austria and predominantly belong to the same religious groups as native-born citizens.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states all persons shall have the freedom to choose their faith and the state shall be responsible for “protecting the religious...interests of the People.” The constitution specifies Roman Catholicism is the state religion, which “shall enjoy full protection from the state.” The constitution stipulates other religions may practice their beliefs and hold religious services “within the bounds of morality and public order.”

Municipalities provide the Catholic Church with certain unique benefits that vary by municipality, including financial support and state maintenance of buildings and grounds owned by the Church.

There is no law requiring the registration of religious groups. Religious groups other than the state-sponsored Catholic Church may organize themselves as private associations, which enables registration in the commercial registry, and must do so to receive government funding for such activities as providing religious education in schools or carrying out projects to promote social integration of religious minorities, such as language courses for foreigners. To register an association in the commercial registry, the association must submit an official letter of application to the Office of Justice, including the organization’s name, purpose, board members, and head office location, as well as a memorandum of association based on local law, a trademark certification, and a copy of the organization’s statutes.

All religious groups are exempt from certain taxes.

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

The criminal code prohibits any form of public incitement to hatred or discrimination against or disparagement of any religion or its adherents by spoken, written, visual, or electronic means. The criminal code also prohibits the denial, trivialization, and justification of genocide and other crimes against humanity by spoken, written, visual, or electronic means. Penalties may include a prison sentence of up to two years. The criminal code prohibits refusing service to a person or group of persons based on religious affiliation as well as membership in any association that aims to promote discrimination against a person or persons based on religious affiliation.

The law requires religious education be included in the curriculum in public schools, both at the primary and secondary levels. Catholic or Protestant Reformed religious education is compulsory in all primary schools; exemptions are available for children whose parents request them from the Office of Education. Parents are not required to give a reason for exemptions. The law also grants the Office of Education the right to organize and finance Islamic education as an elective in public primary schools. Catholic, Protestant Reformed, and Muslim groups provide the teachers for religious instruction, and the Office of Education pays for some or all of their salaries. The Catholic Church determines the Catholic curriculum, with minimal supervision from municipalities. Other religious groups registered as associations may provide teachers for optional religious classes if there is a demand for them and may apply for partial funding of the teachers' salaries from the government's integration budget.

At the secondary school level, parents and students may choose between a course on Catholic religious education, which the government finances and the Catholic religious community organizes, and a general course in religion and culture taught from a sociological perspective.

To receive residency permits, foreign religious workers must have completed theological studies, command a basic level of German, belong to a nationally known religious group (the law does not define "nationally known"), and be sponsored by a resident clergy member of the religious group.

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

Government Practices

All religious groups, including Muslims, were allowed to bury their dead in cemeteries owned by municipalities. Muslims said they had still not been able to

obtain permission from local authorities to establish an Islamic cemetery in the country. The Liechtenstein Institute stated in 2017 that societal skepticism and apprehension towards Islam were the likely reasons for the difficulties the Muslim community experienced in trying to establish a cemetery.

Speaking to the student newspaper of the German Zeppelin University in September, a representative of the Turkish Association stated the community's wish to construct a proper mosque and establish a Muslim burial site continued to "fall on deaf ears," and that officials showed "no interest" in these issues. In September a local Muslim woman told the same newspaper the Muslim community wished to have more government support, especially with respect to establishing an Islamic cemetery. The government stated it received no official requests to construct a mosque or to remodel existing buildings into a mosque during the year. Government officials also said construction of cemeteries fell under the jurisdiction of municipalities.

Public primary schools in five municipalities offered Islamic education twice each month to a total of 65 students between the ages of six and 12.

Public schools continued to include Holocaust education as part of their curriculum and held discussion forums on the Holocaust to mark the Day of Remembrance on January 27. In January on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Liechtenstein Grammar School invited Rabbi Tovia Ben-Chorin from the neighboring Swiss canton of St. Gallen to discuss whether remembrance of the Holocaust served to prevent anti-Semitism and racism. Students also discussed the meaning of exile with the rabbi. Classes at a high school in Eschen again reflected on the lessons of the Holocaust while discussing the current European migration crisis.

Funding for religious institutions continued to derive mainly from the municipalities. The municipalities provided Catholic and Protestant Reformed churches annual contributions in proportion to membership.

The government immigration and passport office continued to issue religious workers residency permits, valid for five years, instead of visas. Religious workers from Schengen member countries did not require permits or visas. A representative of the Turkish Association stated that the most recent imam to reside in the country left during the year to pursue another position and was not replaced. According to the representative, the government denied the Turkish Association's chosen successor for unknown reasons. According to government officials, the

government had not yet found a successor by year's end. There were no reports that the government issued resident permits to clergy from other groups during the year.

According to the foreign ministry, the government's Office for Social Services and the government-supported Liechtenstein Human Rights Association, a consortium of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), functioned as the main bodies responsible for the integration of Muslims. The foreign ministry continued to invite Muslim representatives to its annual dialogue with NGOs to address issues of concern and interest to the Muslim community.

On January 30, in honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the President of Parliament, Albert Frick, together with the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem, invited government officials and the public to the Liechtenstein National Museum in Vaduz for a presentation on "Art During the Holocaust – Acts of Faith and Defiance" held by the art curator of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg. In his speech, Frick emphasized the need for government and society not to turn away from injustice and to insist on accountability and resolution to protect present and future generations from similar atrocities.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

In contrast with previous years, there were no reports of statements hostile to religious minorities by members of groups considered to be extremist. One such group, European Action, which in the past had advocated the right to deny the Holocaust, disbanded in 2017 and shut down its Facebook page.

There were no mosques in the country; there was one Islamic prayer room run by the Turkish Association in Triesen. The Islamic Community of Liechtenstein ran another prayer room in the canton of St. Gallen in neighboring Switzerland. According to the Liechtenstein Institute, the Islamic Community remained unable to establish a prayer room in the country. The institute did not cite a reason for the Islamic Community's inability to open a prayer room, but in 2017 it stated that Muslims continued to face difficulties finding prayer room spaces to rent, due to society's skepticism and wariness towards Islam.

In September a representative of the Turkish Association told the student newspaper of the German Zeppelin University that a group of cyclists had pulled up alongside him and his wife and insulted her over her headscarf. He did not indicate when the incident happened. He also stated that it was not uncommon for

Muslim women to lose their jobs over the wearing of headscarves, and that the women often only found jobs cleaning office spaces after-hours in order “not to damage the reputations of local businesses.”

According to the Liechtenstein Institute annual report, published during the year and covering 2017, the Princely Court of Liechtenstein sentenced in February 2017 a 71-year-old man to a six-month suspended prison sentence and a fine of 2,400 Swiss francs (\$2400) for publicly yelling xenophobic and anti-Semitic slurs at foreigners in March and April 2016. The man reportedly yelled, “Hitler should come back and gas you all” and “Heil Hitler!” at them.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, religious groups in every municipality continued to open their chapels to other denominations and faiths upon request, including to Orthodox and Islamic groups.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

U.S. embassy staff continued to discuss religious freedom issues, including access to religious education by different religious groups and the establishment of religious infrastructure, such as a mosque or Muslim burial sites, with the foreign ministry.

Embassy staff also continued to discuss the effects of laws on religious practices and the extent of societal discrimination with the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem and the Liechtenstein Institute.