

PORTUGAL 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and worship and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion. The government, via the High Commission for Migration (ACM), sponsored activities to promote religious tolerance and acceptance, published religious texts, and organized education for teachers and workers interacting with persons of diverse religious backgrounds. The government granted citizenship during the year to 3,525 descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled during the Inquisition. President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and other senior officials advocated religious tolerance and harmony at public events throughout the year, including during regular visits to churches, mosques, and other places of worship.

In February the European Jewish Congress reported in a newsletter that government officials, whom it did not name, characterized the country as having an almost nonexistent level of public anti-Semitism. According to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey cited in September, 52 percent of residents of the country believed Muslim women should be free to wear any religious clothing without restriction; 44 percent favored at least some restrictions. A series of 2015-17 Pew surveys cited in October found 70 percent of non-Muslims would be willing to accept Muslims as members of their family, and 73 percent of non-Jews would be willing to accept Jews as members of their family.

U.S. embassy representatives continued to meet regularly with the independent Commission for Religious Freedom (CLR) and ACM officials and discussed the importance of mutual respect and understanding among religious communities and the integration of immigrants, many of whom belonged to religious minority groups. The ambassador and other embassy officials met with Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Orthodox religious leaders, including from the Ismaili Imamat, Jewish Community of Lisbon, and Islamic Center of Bangladesh in Lisbon, to discuss religious tolerance and interfaith collaboration. The embassy hosted a multimedia theatrical presentation on ways to combat religious intolerance and funded the visit of a Muslim youth leader to the United States to participate in a program on religious freedom and interfaith dialogue.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 10.4 million (July 2018 estimate). According to the 2011 census, more than 80 percent of the population older than 15 is Roman Catholic. Other religious groups, each constituting less than 1 percent of the population, include Orthodox Christians; various Protestant and other Christian denominations, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Lutheran Church of Portugal, Universal Church of Jesus Christ, New Apostolic Church, Portuguese Evangelical Methodist Church, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ); and Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Taoists, Zoroastrians, and Baha'is. Approximately 6.8 percent of the population said it does not belong to any religious group, and 8.2 percent did not answer the question. According to the census, mainline Protestants number more than 75,000 persons, and there are more than 163,000 members of other Christian denominations, including evangelicals. According to the census, there are more than 56,000 members of the Eastern Orthodox Church, most of whom are immigrants from Eastern Europe, primarily from Ukraine, and approximately 3,000 Jews. The Muslim community estimates there are 50,000 Muslims.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom of worship, which may not be violated even if the government declares a state of emergency. It states no one shall be privileged, prejudiced, persecuted, or deprived of rights or exempted from civic obligations or duties because of religious beliefs or practices. The constitution states authorities may not question individuals about their religious convictions or observance, except to gather statistical information that does not identify individuals, and in such cases individuals may not be prejudiced by refusal to reply. Churches and religious communities are independent from the state and have the freedom to determine their own organization and perform their own activities and worship. The constitution affords each religious community the freedom to teach its religion and use its own media to disseminate public information about its activities. It bars political parties from using names directly associated with, or symbols that may be confused with those of, religious groups. The constitution and the law recognize the right to conscientious objection to military service, including on religious grounds; they require conscientious objectors to perform equivalent alternative civilian service.

Religious groups may be organized in a variety of forms that have national, regional, or local character. A denomination may choose to organize as one

national church or religious community or as several regional or local churches or religious communities. An international church or religious community may set up a representative organization of its adherents separate from the branch of the church or religious community existing in the country. A registered church or religious community may create subsidiary or affiliated organizations, such as associations, foundations, or federations.

All religious groups with an organized presence in the country may apply for registration with the registrar of religious corporate bodies in the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The requirements include: providing the organization's official name, which must be distinguishable from all other religious corporate bodies in the country; the organizing documents of the church or religious community associated with the group applying for registration; the address of the organization's registered main office in the country; a statement of the group's religious purposes; documentation of the organization's assets; information on the organization's formation, composition, rules, and activities; provisions for dissolution of the organization; and the appointment method and powers of the organization's representatives. Subsidiary or affiliated organizations included in the parent group's application are also registered; if not included, they must register separately. The MOJ may reject a registration application if it fails to meet legal requirements, includes false documentation, or violates constitutional rights of religious freedom. In the case where the MOJ rejects an application, religious groups may appeal to the CLR within 30 days of receiving the MOJ's decision.

The CLR is an independent, consultative body to parliament and the government, established by law. Its members include representatives of various religious groups in the country, such as the Portuguese Episcopal Conference, Evangelical Alliance, Jewish Community of Lisbon, Islamic Community of Lisbon, Hindu Community of Lisbon, and Aga Khan Foundation, as well as laypersons appointed by the MOJ. The Council of Ministers appoints its president. The CLR reviews and takes a position on all matters relating to the application of the law on religious freedom, including proposed amendments. The CLR alerts the competent authorities, including the president, parliament, and others in the government, to cases involving religious freedom and discrimination, such as restrictions or prohibitions on the right to assembly and the holding of religious services; the destruction or desecration of religious property; assaults against members and clergy of religious groups; incitement of religious discord; hate speech; and violations of the rights of foreign missionaries.

The CLR may file formal complaints at the national level with the ombudsman, an official position created by the constitution and supplemental legislation to defend the rights and freedoms of individual citizens, and at the international level with the European Court of Human Rights. The ombudsman has no legal enforcement power, but he or she is obligated to address complaints and provides an alternative remedy for dispute resolution.

The ACM, an independent government body operating under the guidelines of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, has a statutory obligation to advocate religious tolerance, including the “promotion of dialogue, innovation, and intercultural and inter-religious education” and “combating all forms of discrimination based on color, nationality, ethnic origin or religion.”

Religious groups may register as religious corporations and receive tax-exempt status. They also receive the right to minister in prisons, hospitals, and military facilities; provide religious teaching in public schools; participate in broadcasting time on public television and radio; and receive national recognition of religious holidays. The government certifies religious ministers, who receive all the benefits of the social security system. According to the law, chaplaincies for military services, prisons, and hospitals are state-funded positions open to all registered religious groups. A taxpayer may allocate 5 percent of his or her tax payment to any registered religious group.

Religious groups may also register as unincorporated associations or private corporations, and in that form they may receive the same benefits granted to religious corporations. The process for registering as unincorporated associations or private corporations involves the same procedures as for religious corporations. There are no practical differences between associations and private corporations; the different categories distinguish the groups’ internal administration. Unregistered religious groups are not subject to penalties and may practice their religion but do not receive the benefits associated with registration.

By law, religious groups registered in the country for at least 30 years or internationally recognized for 60 years may obtain a higher registration status of “religion settled in the country.” To show they are established, religions must demonstrate an “organized social presence” for the required length of time. These groups receive government subsidies based on the number of members they have; may conclude “mutual interest” agreements with the state on issues such as education, culture, or other forms of cooperation; and may celebrate religious marriages that have effect in the state legal system. The government has mutual

interest agreements with Jewish and Islamic religious bodies and a concordat with the Holy See that serves the same function for the Catholic Church.

Public secondary schools offer an optional survey course on world religions taught by lay teachers. Optional religious instruction is available at government expense if at least 10 students attend the class. Religious groups are responsible for designing the curriculum of the religious classes and providing and training the teachers, who are lay. Private schools are required to offer the same curriculum as public schools but may provide instruction in any religion at their expense. All schools, public and private, are required to accommodate the religious practices of students, including rescheduling tests if necessary.

The law prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals on the basis of religion and requires reasonable accommodation of employees' religious practices. According to the labor code, employees are allowed to take leave on their Sabbath and religious holidays, even if these are not nationally observed.

The law provides for the naturalization of Jewish descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled from the country in the 15th and 16th centuries.

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

Government Practices

The government reported that, of 13,607 applications received during the year, it had approved the naturalization of 3,525 Sephardic descendants of Jews expelled from the country during the Inquisition. The government rejected three applications, and 9,460 others remained pending. Beneficiaries of the program included individuals from Israel (9,517), Brazil (939), and Turkey (876).

There were complaints by some religious minorities, such as evangelical Christians, that the Catholic Church had an advantage over minority religious groups, since most prisons, hospitals, and military services had designated Catholic priests, while minority religions did not have designated representation. Jose Vera Jardim, chairman of the CLR, said, "There is discrimination" in that, since the country is more than 80 percent Catholic, "the Catholic Church has a more articulated and stronger presence in chaplaincies." According to the CRF, the vast majority of those who sought chaplain assistance requested a Catholic priest. Vera Jardim stated he did not believe there were serious grievances from religious

denominations and “The right to assistance ... is safeguarded.” There were no official statistics on the percentage of chaplaincies each religious group held.

In February four left-leaning parties introduced separate draft bills in parliament that would have legalized assisted suicide in cases of terminal illness and “unbearable suffering.” On May 24, the president received 16 representatives from eight religious communities, Catholic, evangelical Christian, Seventh-day Adventist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Orthodox Christian, and Buddhist, to discuss the four bills to decriminalize and regulate medically assisted death. All 16 representatives expressed opposition to medically assisted killing. Catholic Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon and President of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference Manuel Clemente said the country should follow the example of “other democratic and evolved societies,” which opted to improve palliative care. Pastor Jorge Humberto of the Portuguese Evangelical Alliance called euthanasia “a civilizational retrocession.” Sheikh David Munir, Imam of the Central Islamic Mosque in Lisbon, said, “We ... have the same voice ... I hope we will care for those who need our help rather than abandon them.” Rabbi Natan Peres of the Jewish Community of Lisbon welcomed that the subject of euthanasia had shown that religious groups in the country could unite and work together. On May 29, parliament rejected all four bills. The bill that came closest to passage, introduced by the governing Socialist Party, was defeated 115-110. All of the versions would have allowed health-care providers to refuse to participate in euthanasia because of moral or other personal beliefs.

The ACM hosted events, activities, and debates, published books on religion to promote religious tolerance and acceptance, and provided education for teachers and workers interacting with individuals of diverse religious backgrounds. On October 3, the ACM hosted the Second Interreligious Dialogue Congress, “Caring for Others,” in partnership with the CLR. The Minister of the Presidency and Administrative Modernization, Maria Manuel Leitao Marques; the State Secretary for Citizenship and Equality, Rosa Monteiro; the High Commissioner for Migration, Pedro Calado; and CLR Chairman Vera Jardim participated in the congress, held at the Catholic University in Lisbon. Religious groups participating included Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, evangelical Christians, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, Hindus, and Baha’is. Among topics discussed by congress participants were the role of religious groups in providing services in hospitals and prisons, civil society, and formal and informal education. Representatives of religious groups pledged to work together to organize social and community activities to promote religious acceptance. The ACM and the CRF proposed

designating February 1 as the National Day of Religious Freedom and Interreligious Dialogue. Parliament had not taken up the proposal by year's end.

The ACM also organized a course on November 1-4, coordinated by the British Council and funded by the European Commission, to train 29 persons to become community leaders in identifying and combating discrimination, including religious discrimination, and to promote inclusion. The trainees agreed to organize periodic visits to religious communities, museums, libraries, cultural centers, and temples to experience the religious and cultural diversity in the country.

The state-run television channel RTP continued to broadcast a half-hour religious program five days a week and a weekly half-hour program, with segments for both written by different religious groups. Participant religious groups, which had to be registered, included the Evangelical Alliance, Orthodox Church, Seventh-day Adventists, Islamic Community of Lisbon, Baha'i Community, Old Catholic Church, Orthodox Catholic Church, Roman Catholic Church, Hindu Community, and Jewish Community.

During a visit to the Central Lisbon Seventh-day Adventist Church on March 3, President Rebelo de Sousa thanked the Seventh-day Adventist community for its contribution to the "construction of justice, of social solidarity, for a more humane, fraternal, and more united Portugal." He added that one of the principles of his mandate was "proximity ... also to religious communities as well as to those who do not practice a belief or faith," and that the country was open to religious pluralism, with "instruments that guarantee a fair treatment of the various churches and creeds." The president also said the state had the duty to collaborate with churches and religious communities in the country.

On March 16, the president awarded the Order of Freedom to the Islamic Community of Lisbon, which celebrated its 50th anniversary. At a ceremony in Lisbon's Central Mosque, Rebelo de Sousa said he presented the award to the Islamic Community of Lisbon for the defense of "religious freedom and freedom in general." He stated, "Humanistic values are by nature the values of Islam." In addition, present at the ceremony were UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the three living former presidents of the country, Speaker of Parliament Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, Lisbon Mayor Fernando Medina, and Cardinal Clemente.

On February 26, the CLR awarded its first annual religious freedom prize to Rita Mendonca Leite for her work *The Role of the Religious Society in the Development of Religious Freedom in Portugal during the Constitutional Monarchy and the*

First Republic. It attributed two honorable mentions: *Use of Religious Symbols in the Workplace: The Limits to Freedom of Expression of Religious Convictions* by Susana Machado and *The European Court of Human Rights and Religious Symbols: The Use of the Islamic Veil in 21st Century Europe* by Ines Granja Costa.

On June 5, at the Central Mosque of Lisbon, President Rebelo de Sousa joined the President of the Islamic Community of Lisbon, Aboul Vakil, Sheikh Munir, and members of the Muslim community, as well as members of other religious faiths, at an iftar at the Central Mosque of Lisbon. In his remarks, Rebelo de Sousa said, “It is an honor for me ... to be here ... sharing understanding, fraternity and affection,” adding that the country followed the constitutional principles of religious freedom and interreligious living.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

In its report for 2017, the most recent available, the CLR said it had received several complaints involving religion, including disputes between municipalities and religious groups over places of worship, religious activities in schools, and taking time off from work during the Sabbath or religious holidays. The CRF said it responded to each case but provided no further details.

In its February newsletter, the European Jewish Congress stated that government officials, whom it did not name, characterized the country as having an almost nonexistent level of public anti-Semitism.

According to a survey by the Pew Research Center conducted in 2017 and cited in September, 52 percent of residents said Muslim women should be free to wear any religious clothing without restrictions. Of the remainder, 32 percent said they should be able to wear religious clothing as long as it did not cover the face, and 12 percent believed Muslim women should not be allowed to wear any religious garb. Pew Research Center Surveys conducted in 2015-17 and cited in October found that 56 percent of residents agreed religion should be kept separate from the state, while 40 percent disagreed. The surveys also found 70 percent of non-Muslims would be willing to accept Muslims as members of their family and 73 percent of non-Jews would be willing to accept Jews as members of their family. Among young adults 18 to 34 years old, 87 percent and 89 percent, respectively, said they would accept Muslims and Jews as family.

Along with approximately 45,000 Ismaili Muslims, Prince Aga Khan IV visited the country on July 6-11 to conclude a yearlong commemoration of his 60 years as leader of the Ismaili religious community. On July 9, President Rebelo de Sousa and Prime Minister Costa welcomed him with state honors, and parliament hosted a conference for his visit, bringing together religious groups, civil society, and public and private organizations to recognize the work of Prince Aga Khan and the Ismaili community in the country. Lisbon Mayor Fernando Medina said the Ismaili community found in the country “intercultural dialogue and religious tolerance that symbolizes Portuguese society.”

According to press reports, in August a brewery in Belmonte, Castelo Branco District, in the center of the country announced it had begun brewing the country’s first artisanal kosher beer, which would be sold in the town’s annual kosher market, opening in October. Belmonte is one of three municipalities in the country with its own rabbi and synagogue. Although it has few practicing Jews, the town has a long Jewish history, and many inhabitants reportedly are descendants of Jews forced to convert to Christianity in the 16th century. The beer was to be brewed under the supervision of Belmonte Chief Rabbi Elisha Salas, emissary for Portugal and Spain of Shavei Israel, a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting descendants of Jews to reclaim their roots.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

U.S. embassy representatives met regularly with CLR and ACM officials and discussed the importance of mutual respect and understanding among religious communities and the integration of immigrants, many of whom belonged to religious minority groups.

The ambassador and embassy representatives met with leaders of religious groups, including the Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslim communities, to discuss issues of religious tolerance and encourage interfaith collaboration. The ambassador continued his contact with Sheikh Munir and Arif Z. Lalani, head of the Department for Diplomatic Affairs of the Ismaili Imamat, to discuss ways in which the Muslim community and the embassy could work together to promote religious acceptance and tolerance. Embassy officials met with Gabriel Szary Steinhardt and Esther Mucznik, president and vice president, respectively, of the Jewish Community of Lisbon; Maria Antonieta Rebelo Vinagre Becker-Weinberg, president of the Somej Nophlim Jewish Association; Rabbi Eliyohu Rosenfeld of Chabad Lisbon; Rana Uddin, president of the Islamic Center of Bangladesh in Lisbon; president of the Islamic Community Vakil; and Archimandrite Philip

Jagnisz, vicar of Portugal and Galiza of the Eastern Orthodox Church. At all of these meetings, embassy officials discussed the importance of freedom of expression of religious views, promoting tolerance and understanding among religious communities, and countering the spread of religiously motivated violence.

During a March visit to the Sahar Hassamaim Synagogue, the oldest standing synagogue in the country, located on Sao Miguel Island in the Azores Autonomous Region, the principal officer of the consulate in Ponta Delgada met with historian Jose de Almeida Mello, the coordinator of the Azores Synagogue Restoration Committee and curator of the Sahar Hassamaim Synagogue Museum. Although no longer used as a synagogue, Sahar Hassamaim serves as a library as well as a museum, with a mission to preserve Jewish history in the country and promote religious tolerance. Following that visit, the principal officer contacted U.S. universities and institutions with Judaic studies programs to encourage future collaboration on the synagogue archives.

On July 27, the embassy posted on its Facebook page the speech by the U.S. Secretary of State at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, held in July in Washington, D.C., in which the Secretary stated that religious freedom is an essential building block for free societies and emphasized that ensuring religious freedom around the world was a U.S. foreign policy priority.

In September the embassy organized a “Debunking Disinformation: Building Cultural Integrity through Storytelling” conference, in which the cofounders of a theater company shared their experience of countering anti-Islamic sentiment and discourse with narratives blending lived experiences, religious texts, and imaginary worlds.

The embassy sponsored the visit of Khalid Jamal, leader of Lisbon’s Muslim youth community, to the United States on October 13-27, to participate in a program focusing on religious freedom, diversity, and expression, including interfaith dialogue and examples of protections granted to religious minorities in the United States.