

ANDORRA 2015 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. Some Muslims expressed concerns individuals wearing head coverings for religious reasons had to remove them in photographs for official documents. The government did not take action regarding Muslim and Jewish concerns about a lack of cemeteries where these groups could bury their dead according to their religious traditions. 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..

Ten religious communities making up the Interfaith Dialogue Group met periodically to discuss issues of common interest regarding religious traditions, beliefs, and tolerance.

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 2015 estimate). The government does not provide statistics on the size of religious groups, and there is no 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 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 more than 1,300 members. The Jewish community reports it has approximately 80 members.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

ANDORRA

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. It states the “freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in the interests of public safety, order, health, or morals, or for the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms 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.

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.

Instruction in the Catholic faith is optional in public schools. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the government pays their salaries.

Government Practices

ANDORRA

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

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

The government did not take action regarding concerns by representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities about the lack of cemeteries where they could bury their dead 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 and 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.

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,” and had to enter the country under a different status. Foreign religious workers could enter the country with permits for other jobs such as schoolteachers or business workers and were able to carry out religious work without hindrance.

The government funded the nongovernmental Catholic organization AINA for youth summer camps. The government also funded the Muslim socio-cultural organization Averroes to conduct a project designed to more closely integrate Muslim women and children in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

A 2014 assault by two individuals of a Jew outside of a discotheque in the city of La Massana remained under investigation.

Ten religious communities made up the Interfaith Dialogue Group. The Andorran National Commission for UNESCO collaborated with the group, which met

ANDORRA

periodically to discuss issues of common interest regarding religious traditions, beliefs, and tolerance. 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.

Seventh-day Adventists inaugurated their first church in the country in May.

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.

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 and the implications of regulations requiring individuals to remove head coverings for official identity documents.