

SLOVENIA

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 7,827 square miles and a population of approximately 1,964,000. Estimates of religious identification varied. According to the 2002 census, the numbers were: Roman Catholic, 1,135,626; Evangelical, 14,736; other Protestant, 1,399; Orthodox, 45,908; other Christian, 1,877; Muslim, 47,488; Jewish, 99; Oriental, 1,026; other religion, 558; agnostic, 271; believer, but belonging to no religion, 68,714; unbeliever/atheist, 199,264; no reply, 307,973; and unknown, 139,097.

The Orthodox and Muslim populations appeared to correspond to the country's immigrant Serb and Bosniak populations, respectively. These groups tended to have a lower socioeconomic status in society.

Foreign missionaries, including a mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and other religious groups (including Hare Krishna, Church of Scientology, and the Unification Church), operated without hindrance.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There were no formal requirements for recognition as a religion by the Government. Religious communities must register with the Government's Office for Religious Communities if they wish to be legal entities, and registration entitles such groups to rebates on value-added taxes. During the reporting period, there were forty-one religious communities officially registered, up from forty in 2005 and thirty-six in 2003. Four cases remained pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Registered religious groups, including foreign missionaries, may receive value-added tax rebates on a quarterly basis from the Ministry of Finance. All groups reported equal access to registration and tax rebate status.

In 2004, several political parties proposed that religious instruction be made compulsory; however, the Ministry of Education rejected the initiative on the basis of existing legislation. The constitution states that parents are entitled to give their children "a moral and religious upbringing." Only those schools that were supported by religious bodies taught religion.

According to the Office for Religious Communities, it has been government policy since 1991 to pay the share of social insurance contribution for clergy and other full time religious workers that is normally paid by an employer.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

After independence in 1991, Parliament passed legislation calling for denationalization (with restitution or compensation) within a fixed period of church properties-church buildings and support buildings, residences, businesses, and forests-that were nationalized after World War II by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. By March 31, 2006, the Government had adjudicated 35,241 (92 percent) of the 38,306 denationalization claims filed. In 2004, the Government reallocated existing resources to reduce the backlog in cases, effectively quickening the pace of resolution.

The Roman Catholic Church was a major property holder in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before World War II. After the war, much church property was confiscated and nationalized by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Despite the Catholic Church's numerical predominance, restitution of its property remained a politically unpopular issue. By October 31, 2005, the Government had adjudicated 61.8 percent of claims filed by the Roman Catholic Church and had compensated or returned \$170 million (135.1 million euros) worth of property. The total value of all property and compensation being claimed by the Roman Catholic Church was \$293 million (233.2 million euros).

Many Jewish communal and heirless properties were also either confiscated or nationalized during and after World War II. To date, there has been no restitution for these losses. In 2005, the Ministry of Justice created a new Department for Restitution and National Reconciliation to study the issue of private property restitution and compile an inventory of Jewish private properties nationalized or confiscated after World War II. The Government was to issue a tender for this project in June 2006, and research was expected to begin by the fall of 2006.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom.

Societal attitudes toward religion were complex. Historical events dating from long before the country's independence colored perceptions regarding the dominant Catholic Church. Much of the gulf between the (at least nominally) Catholic center-right and the largely agnostic or atheistic center-left stemmed from the killing of large numbers of alleged Nazi and Fascist collaborators in the years 1946-1948. Many of the so-called collaborators were successful businessmen whose assets were confiscated after they were killed or driven from the country, and many were also prominent Catholics. After independence, right-of-center

political groups called for a purge of communist government and business officials, but this call was quickly replaced by one for reconciliation.

Interfaith relations were generally amicable in the period covered by this report, although there was little warmth between the majority Catholic Church and foreign missionary groups that were viewed as aggressive proselytizers. Societal attitudes toward the minority Jewish, Muslim, and Serb Orthodox communities generally were tolerant; however, some persons feared the possible emergence of Muslim fundamentalism. While there were no governmental restrictions on the Muslim community's freedom of worship, services were commonly held in private homes under cramped conditions because of the lack of mosques.

The Muslim community had long been planning to build a mosque in the capital of Ljubljana. The absence of a mosque was due, in part, to a lack of organization in the Muslim community and to complex legislation and bureaucracy in construction and land regulations. In 2004, a locally organized referendum campaign sought to prevent the Muslim community from building a mosque in Ljubljana, but the plans to hold a referendum were struck down by the Constitutional Court before the referendum could be held. In 2005, plans for building the mosque were stalled in part because of the discovery that part of the land that the city had identified for sale to the Muslim community was subject to a denationalization claim by the Catholic Church. The Church agreed to forgo its claim if compensated by the city. At the end of the period covered by this report, city authorities were set to vote on a budgetary appropriation to provide compensation to the Church and clear the land for sale to the Muslim community.

In early October 2004, a Jewish family grave was desecrated; police had not identified the perpetrators by the end of the period covered by this report. Such acts were extremely rare. However, Jewish community representatives reported some prejudice, ignorance, false stereotypes, and negative images of Jews within society.

The Government promoted tolerance and anti-bias education through its programs in primary and secondary schools. The Holocaust is an obligatory topic in the contemporary history curriculum; however, teachers had a great deal of latitude in deciding how much time to devote to it. The country formally joined in the Council of Europe's 2004 proclamation of May 9 as Holocaust Memorial Day. Schools carried out various activities to remember the Holocaust on May 9, for example, watching documentaries, writing assignments, and holding discussions on the topic.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. Embassy held extensive discussions with the Government on the topic of property denationalization and restitution for heirless and communal Jewish properties confiscated or nationalized after World War II. In addition, the embassy has made informal inquiries into the status of the mosque construction project. The embassy meets with members of all major religious communities, representatives of nongovernmental organizations that address religious freedom issues, and government officials from relevant offices and ministries.