

SAN MARINO 2016 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The law prohibits religious discrimination, prevents restrictions on religious freedom, and includes provisions for prosecuting religious hate crimes. Catholic religious instruction is offered in all public schools, but the law guarantees the right of nonparticipation without penalty. Taxpayers may designate 0.3 percent of their income tax be allocated to the Catholic Church or other religious groups registered as nonprofit organizations. Catholic symbols were common in state buildings. Prisoners at the state prison complained it lacked space in which to worship.

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

During periodic visits, officials from the U.S. Consulate General in Florence emphasized support for religious tolerance with government leaders and civil society representatives. U.S. officials raised the issue of the lack of access to worship in prison facilities with government officials.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 33,000 (July 2016 estimate). The local government does not provide statistics on the size of religious groups, and there is no census data on religious group membership, but government officials stated the vast majority of the population is Roman Catholic. Other religious groups include Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahais, Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians, and members of the Waldensian Church. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of Orthodox Church members has increased in recent years due to immigration from Eastern Europe.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

Constitutional law guarantees freedom of religion and prohibits religious-based discrimination and restrictions on religious freedom, except for the protection of public order and general welfare. The law includes provisions for prosecuting hate crimes and speech that defiles religious groups.

The law allows taxpayers to allocate 0.3 percent of their income tax payments to the Catholic Church or to other religious or nonreligious groups or charities registered as nonprofit organizations. Religious organizations must be legally recognized by San Marino Court to receive this benefit. In order to obtain legal recognition, religious organizations are required to submit evidence of not-for-profit activities and annual reports. The court may periodically audit and inspect organizations, require them to submit additional documentation, and investigate any complaints from organization members or third parties. If a taxpayer allocates a portion of his or her income tax payment to a previously unregistered group, the tax authorities will contact the group to confirm its legitimacy and review its financial statements.

There are no private religious schools, and the law requires religious education in public schools. Only Catholic religious instruction is offered. The state approved curriculum includes comparisons between Christianity and other religions and between the Bible and other religious texts. Teachers are selected by the Church and may be religious or lay. Religious instruction is funded by the government. The law also guarantees students the right to choose not to participate in religious instruction without penalty. Students (or the parents, if the student is under 18) must choose to opt out at the beginning of each school year.

The government is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

As of 2015, the latest year for which figures were available, there were approximately 130 religious and nonreligious groups or charities registered as nonprofit organizations that received contributions from taxpayers, including the Catholic Church, a number of Catholic associations, Jehovah's Witnesses, and an Orthodox Christian association. Information as to how many of the 130 organizations were religious was unavailable.

Prisoners in the state-run prison complained that it lacked space where they could worship. However, they were allowed access to religious clergy. The country did not begin construction of a new prison to increase space as previously announced.

Catholic symbols were common in government buildings. For example, crucifixes hung on courtroom and government office walls. The government maintained a

public meditation and prayer site in the capital for use by worshipers of any religion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

During periodic visits, the Consul General and other representatives from the U.S. Consulate General in Florence discussed support of religious freedom with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. U.S. officials raised the issue of prisoner complaints about lack of access to worship facilities, and government representatives stated they were looking into the issue.

Consulate General representatives also discussed support for religious freedom with civil society representatives, including labor unions and the U.S.-San Marino Association.