

107th Congress }
1st Session }

JOINT COMMITTEE PRINT

ANNUAL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM 2001

REPORT

SUBMITTED TO THE

COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AND THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
U.S. SENATE

BY THE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102 OF THE
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998

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DECEMBER 2001

Printed for the use of the Committees on International Relations of the
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FOREWORD

The report on international religious freedom contained herein was prepared by the Department of State in accordance with Section 102 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

The report is printed to assist Members of Congress in the consideration of legislation, particularly foreign assistance legislation.

HENRY J. HYDE,

Chairman, Committee on International Relations.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.,

Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, October 26, 2001.

Hon. HENRY J. HYDE, *Chairman,*
Committee on International Relations,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: On behalf of Secretary of State Colin Powell, I am very pleased to transmit to Congress the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom 2001*. This report is prepared in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and covers events from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001.

We sincerely hope that this report is helpful. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

PAUL V. KELLY, *Assistant Secretary.*

PREFACE

2001 REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Why The Reports Are Prepared

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. The law provides that the Secretary of State shall transmit to Congress by September 1 of each year, or the first day thereafter on which the appropriate House of Congress is in session, "an Annual Report on International Religious Freedom supplementing the most recent Human Rights Reports by providing additional detailed information with respect to matters involving international religious freedom." This Annual Report includes 195 reports on countries worldwide.

How The Reports Are Prepared

In August 1993, the Secretary of State moved to further strengthen the human rights efforts of our embassies. All sections in each embassy were asked to contribute information and to corroborate reports of human rights violations, and new efforts were made to link mission programming to the advancement of human rights and democracy. In 1994 the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs was reorganized and renamed as the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, reflecting both a broader sweep and a more focused approach to the interlocking issues of human rights, worker rights, and democracy. In 1998 the Secretary of State established the Office of International Religious Freedom; in May 1999, Robert A. Seiple was sworn in as the first Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. The position has been vacant since Ambassador Seiple left in September 2000.

The 2001 Report covers the period from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001, and reflects a year of dedicated effort by hundreds of State Department, Foreign Service, and other U.S. Government employees. Our embassies, which prepared the initial drafts of the reports, gathered information throughout this period from a variety of sources, including government and religious officials, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, human rights monitors, religious groups, and academics. This information-gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service Officers regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuse, monitor elections, and come to the aid of individuals at risk because of their religious beliefs.

After the embassies completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and its Offices of International Religious Freedom, Country Reports and Asylum Affairs, and Bilateral Affairs, in cooperation with other State Department offices. As they worked to corroborate, analyze, and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own sources of information. These included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, and experts from academia and the media. Officers also consulted with experts on issues of religious discrimination and persecution, religious leaders from all faiths, and experts on legal matters. The guiding principle was to ensure that all relevant information was assessed as objectively, thoroughly, and fairly as possible.

The Report will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy, and making assistance, training, and other resource allocations. As mandated by IRFA, it also will be used as a basis for decisions on determining countries that have engaged in or tolerated "particularly severe violations" of religious freedom. Countries involved in these and other violations according to IRFA are not identified as such in this report, but have been and will be engaged independently by the U.S. Government. The Report also will serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's co-

operation with private groups to promote the observance of the internationally recognized right to religious freedom.

INTRODUCTION

It is not an accident that freedom of religion is one of the central freedoms in our Bill of Rights. It is the first freedom of the human soul—the right to speak the words that God places in our mouths. We must stand for that freedom in our country. We must speak for that freedom in the world.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
*May 3, 2001, speech to the
American Jewish Committee*

The 1998 International Religious Freedom Act requires that the Secretary of State, assisted by the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, publish an Annual Report on International Religious Freedom each September. The Annual Reports must include a description of the status of religious freedom in each foreign country, including any violations of religious freedom and any trends toward improvement, as well as an Executive Summary.

The purpose of these reports is to advance the U.S. policy of promoting religious freedom internationally—to speak for that freedom in the world. U.S. policy draws deeply on two traditions: the history and commitment of the American people, and the standards established by the international community. These two traditions not only are consistent but are mutually supportive.

THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The United States has a longstanding commitment to religious liberty. America's founders made religious freedom the first freedom of the Constitution—giving it pride of place among those liberties enumerated in the Bill of Rights—because they believed that guaranteeing the right to search for transcendent truths and ultimate human purpose was a critical component of a durable democracy.

The Founders believed in the universality of human dignity—that all human beings are endowed by the Creator with certain rights that are theirs by virtue of their existence. These rights were inalienable because they were understood to exist prior to societies and governments, and were granted by neither.

A commitment to the inviolable and universal dignity of the human person is at the core of U.S. human rights policy abroad, including the policy of advocating religious freedom. Governments that protect religious freedom for all their citizens are more likely to protect the other fundamental human rights. Encouraging stable, healthy democracies is a vital national interest of the United States. The spread of democracy makes for good neighbors, economic prosperity, increased trade, and a decrease in conflict.

THE INTERNATIONAL NORM OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Freedom of religion and conscience is one of the foundational rights in the post-War system of international human rights instruments. Beginning with Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, religious freedom also is provided for in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Helsinki Accords, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

The belief that fundamental human rights are not created by, but exist prior to, governments is reflected in international instruments as well. According to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights—the foundational text for international human rights advocacy,—“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and are “endowed with reason and conscience.”

In recent years, the international commitment to religious freedom has increased. For example, in 1986 the U.N. Commission on Human Rights established the office of the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, now the Special Rapporteur on

Freedom of Religion or Belief. Since his appointment in 1993, Special Rapporteur Abdelfattah Amor has issued reports on a variety of countries, including Sudan, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Iran, Vietnam, India, Australia, Greece, Germany, and the United States. His work provides substantial and continuing evidence of the commitment of the international community to promoting religious freedom.

The Department of State presents this third *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* (2001) both because it is a vital part of U.S. human rights policy and furthers the interests of the United States, and because of our abiding commitment to the international standard of religious freedom.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vast majority of the world's governments have committed themselves to respect religious freedom. In 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, recognizing that freedom of belief had been proclaimed the highest aspiration of the common people. In Article 18, member states affirmed the right of everyone to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change one's religion and manifest one's religion alone or with others, in public or private. Article 29 stated that the only limitations on religious freedom permissible were those that would secure recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and would meet the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

In addition to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, most countries have accepted one or more of the other international instruments that explicitly protect freedom of religion and belief. For example, 144 countries are parties to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which acknowledges the right of every human being to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice and either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. All signatories have pledged "not to discriminate on the basis of religion."

Notwithstanding the existence of these broadly accepted international instruments protecting religious freedom, there exists in some countries a substantial difference between promise and practice. Much of the world's population lives in countries where the right to religious freedom is restricted or prohibited. This gap between word and deed has several causes and can be analyzed in various ways. We believe the following system of categorization is useful for understanding religious persecution and discrimination.

The first category identifies countries as totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, characterized primarily by their attempts to control thought and expression, including religion. A second category consists of those governments hostile toward certain minority or unapproved religions. Third are countries whose governments neglect the problem of discrimination against minority or nonapproved religions. Fourth, some countries have adopted discriminatory legislation or policies that give preferences to favored religions while disadvantaging others. A final category used in this report identifies some democratic states that have instituted laws or policies resulting in the stigmatization of certain religions—the consequence of identifying them indiscriminately and inaccurately with dangerous "sects" or "cults."

In addition to identifying countries where violations of religious freedom have occurred, this Executive Summary contains a section that gives examples of nations whose governments have taken positive steps to promote or protect religious freedom, although in some cases serious problems may remain. The final section of the summary gives illustrations of actions the U.S. government has taken to encourage other nations to promote and protect the right to affirm one's faith openly and freely and practice that faith without fear of intimidation or reprisals.

This report does not neglect the effect of history, culture, and tradition on religious freedom policies. A particular religion may have dominated the life of a nation for centuries, making more difficult the acceptance of new faiths that offer challenges in both cultural and theological terms. However, tradition and culture should not be used as a pretext for laws or policies that restrict genuine religious belief or its legitimate manifestation. International covenants allow legal restrictions on religious practice, but they must be applied scrupulously and fairly, in as limited a way as possible, without discriminating among religions.

In the end, every nation should meet the standards on religious freedom established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments and covenants that they have accepted. Each nation is accountable to the international community for its failure to meet these standards. The United States

acknowledges and accepts its responsibility to meet these standards in the safeguarding and protection of religious liberty.

The summary is divided into three sections:

- I. Barriers to International Religious Freedom
- II. Positive Developments in International Religious Freedom
- III. U.S. Action to Promote International Religious Freedom

Readers should note that many countries are mentioned in more than one section of the Executive Summary, according to the specific situation being reported.

Part I: Barriers to International Religious Freedom

TOTALITARIAN OR AUTHORITARIAN ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL RELIGIOUS BELIEF OR PRACTICE

Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes are defined by the high degree to which they seek to control thought and expression, especially dissent. It is not uncommon for such regimes to regard religious groups as enemies of the state because of the content of the religion, the fact that the very practice of religion threatens the dominant ideology (often by diverting the loyalties of adherents toward an authority beyond the state), the ethnic character of the religious group, or a mixture of all three. When one or more of these elements is present, the result often is the suppression of religion by the regime.

Afghanistan. Through rigid enforcement of its strict interpretation of Islamic law, Shari'a, the Taliban has caused a marked deterioration of religious freedom in the territory under its control. The Afghan Shi'a minority has been the victim of abuse in significant part because of their religious beliefs. In January 2001, Taliban fighters killed a large number of Hazaras, a Shi'a ethnic group. A month later, despite pleas from many parts of the world, the Taliban destroyed two historic giant Buddhist statues of immense cultural value. Non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize, and apostasy is a capital offense. The Taliban maintained decrees issued in 1999 that forbade the small non-Muslim minority population from building places of worship, ordered them to identify their houses, precluded them from living in the same residence as Muslims, and required non-Muslim women to wear special identifying clothing. In August 2001, after the reporting period, the Taliban arrested members of an international relief agency for proselytizing and was threatening to execute the agency's Afghan employees for allegedly converting to Christianity from Islam.

Burma. The Government continued to impose restrictions on certain religious activities. Through its pervasive internal security apparatus, the Government generally infiltrated or monitored the meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious organizations. It systematically restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom, discouraged or prohibited minority religions from constructing new places of worship and, in some ethnic minority areas, coercively promoted Buddhism over other religions, particularly among members of the minority ethnic groups. The Government prohibited Christian clergy from proselytizing in some areas, and in at least one instance, soldiers beat clergy to discourage them from proselytizing. It also maintained restrictions on the local publication of the Bible and on Christian and Muslim material in general. Christian groups have experienced difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches, while Muslims allege that they essentially are banned from constructing any new mosques anywhere in the country. There also was a significant increase in the level of anti-Muslim violence, in some of which the Government may have acquiesced.

China. The situation for religious freedom and spiritual movements worsened in the past year. The Government continued its policy of restricting religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations in order to prevent the rise of sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party. Many religious adherents reported they were able to practice their faith in officially registered places of worship without interference from the authorities. According to some reports, the Government intensified its harsh and comprehensive campaign against the Falun Gong spiritual movement during the early spring of 2001 and some practitioners reportedly died in prison due to torture and other kinds of mistreatment. Tibetan Buddhist monks suffered abuse and torture after being imprisoned on charges of political activity. The Government continued to prohibit Tibetan Buddhists from recognizing the authority of the Dalai Lama. In some areas, large underground Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church and Protestant "house churches" were subject to more frequent raids and persecution, although persecution of such groups eased somewhat in southeastern China during the year. Security authorities

cracked down on unregistered churches and their members using threats, demolition of property, extortion, and detention. The intensity of the crackdown varied from region to region.

Cuba. The Government continued, in law and in practice, to impose restrictions on freedom of religion. The Ministry of Interior engaged in efforts to control and monitor religious institutions, using infiltration, surveillance and harassment of religious groups. New evangelical groups complained that authorities ignored their attempts to obtain registration, leaving these groups open to potential charges of illegal association. The Government rarely authorizes permits for the construction of new churches, forcing many churches to seek permits to meet in private homes. The process for obtaining a permit and purchasing materials to repair existing churches continued to be a lengthy and expensive process. Religious educational institutions are not allowed. Prisoners, both common and political, at times were arbitrarily denied access to clergy and religious material.

Laos. The Government's poor record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated in some aspects during the period covered by this report. The Government sought greater regulation of the activities of religious organizations. The Lao Peoples Revolutionary Party and the Government emphasized the potential of religion to divide, distract, or destabilize the country and inhibited religious practice by all persons, including the Buddhist majority and a large population of animists. Antireligious activities by local officials continued despite occasional attempts by the central Government to restrain them. In some provinces, the authorities continued to force hundreds of Christians to sign renunciations of their faith and threatened some civil servants with loss of their positions if they did not sign the renunciations. In certain areas, local authorities arrested and detained religious believers and their spiritual leaders, at times meting out harsh sentences on the charge of gathering to create social turmoil. Some minority religious groups reported that they were unable to register new congregations or receive permission to establish new places of worship. While the number of detentions for religious activities went down nationwide, renunciation campaigns and harassment increased in a few provinces. During the period covered by this report, government authorities closed more than 65 churches.

North Korea. Although the Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief, the Government continued to suppress organized religious activity except that of officially recognized groups. Religious and human rights groups outside the country provided numerous reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, or killed because of their religious beliefs. While difficult to confirm, the collective weight of anecdotal evidence of harsh treatment of unauthorized religious activity lends credence to such reports. In particular religious persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China appear to have been arrested and subjected to harsh penalties, including death, according to several unconfirmed reports.

Vietnam. The Government continued to repress religious groups that lacked official recognition. Some of these groups were refused recognition by the Government; others declined to request recognition for various reasons, including not wanting to give the Government a list of members, or from the assumption that the request would be refused. Repressive measures included the destruction of unregistered churches, the arrest and detention of religious leaders, and incidents of forced renunciations of faith. With some prominent exceptions involving groups that do not enjoy official recognition, individual believers in Vietnam generally are free to worship. Religious groups that enjoy official sanction do not face harassment or active repression, but the Government kept in place restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of these groups. For example, it continued to limit the numbers of ordinations to the clergy, the publication of religious materials, and educational and humanitarian activities. In some cases, the Government appointed the leadership of official religious organizations, while in others it exercised veto power over leadership appointment. By requiring religious groups to register with the authorities, the Government controlled and monitored church organizations. Control measures included the political vetting of the leadership of religious organizations and of candidates to become priests or monks. Police routinely questioned persons advocating dissident religious views and arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practices. Officials in some provinces harassed, and at times detained or arrested ethnic minority Protestant Christians who worshipped in unregistered house churches. Authorities imprisoned persons for peacefully practicing religion by using provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years for "abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion."

STATE HOSTILITY TOWARD MINORITY OR NONAPPROVED RELIGIONS

Some governments, while not necessarily determined to implement a program of control over minority religions, nevertheless are hostile to certain minority religions or to elements of religious groups identified as “security threats.” These governments implement policies designed to intimidate certain religious groups, cause their adherents to convert to another faith, or cause their members to flee.

Iran. Government actions continued to create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities. All religious minorities suffered varying degrees of officially sanctioned discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and housing. University applicants are required to pass an examination in Islamic theology, which limited the access of most religious minorities to higher education. The Government fueled anti-Baha’i and anti-Jewish sentiment for political purposes. Baha’is, Jews, Christians, Mandaeans, and Sufi Muslims reported imprisonment, harassment, or intimidation based on their religious beliefs. At least 10 Baha’is were among those still imprisoned for reasons related to their faith, while 9 Jews remained in prison after being convicted for cooperating with a hostile government, belonging to an illegal organization, and recruiting members in an illegal organization. The Revolutionary Court’s conduct in the trial of 13 Jews contributed to worsening societal attitudes toward the Jewish community. The property rights of Baha’is generally were disregarded.

Iraq. Although Shi’a Arabs are the largest religious group in Iraq, Sunni Arabs dominate economic and political life. The Government systematically discriminates against the Shi’as, severely restricting or banning many Shi’a religious practices. It has for decades conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, arbitrary arrest, and protracted detention against the Shi’a religious leaders and adherents. The regime has desecrated Shi’a mosques and holy sites, disrupted Shi’a religious ceremonies, and interfered with Shi’a religious education. It has banned the broadcast of Shi’a programs on government-controlled radio or television and the publication of Shi’a books. In addition the Government has sought to undermine the identity of minority Christian (Assyrian and Chaldean) and Yazidi groups. The Government consistently politicizes and interferes with religious pilgrimages, both of Iraqi Muslims who wish to travel to Mecca and Medina, and of Iraqi and non-Iraqi Muslim pilgrims who travel to holy sites in the country.

Pakistan. The Government failed in many respects to protect the rights of minorities, due both to public policy and unwillingness to alienate certain societal forces hostile to those that practice a different faith. President Musharraf advocated greater tolerance between branches of Islam in society in his June 5 2001 speech to a group of Muslim clergy and announced a ban on two violent sectarian groups. However, discriminatory policies and legislation continue to cause problems for religious minorities. In the case of the Ahmadiya community, the Government discriminates by means of Constitutional and other legal provisions that prohibit members from practicing their religion. Members of religious minorities are relegated to a separate electorate system that, while originally intended to ensure minority representation, means that most members of Parliament have no accountability to minorities. The country’s blasphemy laws frequently are misused to target religious minorities. The “Hudood ordinances” dictate that the legal testimony of religious minorities in certain cases such as rape does not carry the same weight as that of Muslims; this provision leaves minorities particularly vulnerable to acts of societal violence. Discriminatory religious legislation adds to an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which at times has contributed to acts of violence directed against Muslim groups, as well as against Christians, Hindus, and members of Muslim offshoot groups, such as Ahmadis and Zikris. Many people unjustly accused of blasphemy continue to remain in jail. Relations between different religious groups frequently were tense, and the number of deaths attributed to sectarian violence increased—an issue the government has begun to address by banning certain sectarian groups and initiating a deweaponization campaign.

Saudi Arabia. Freedom of religion does not exist in Saudi Arabia. The Government requires all citizens to be Muslim and continues to prohibit all public manifestations of non-Muslim religions. The Government has stated publicly that it recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private; however, the distinction between public and private worship is not defined clearly, and at times the Government detained or interfered with non-Muslims engaged in private worship services, in effect forcing most non-Muslims to worship in a manner such as to avoid discovery. The Government does not permit clergy members to travel into the country to conduct non-Muslim religious services. This places groups such as Catholics and Orthodox Christians who must have a priest on a regular basis to practice their faith at a particular disadvantage. Customs officials confiscated or censored mate-

rials considered offensive, including Bibles and religious videotapes. In certain areas, both the Mutawwa'in (religious police) and religious vigilantes acting on their own harassed, assaulted, and detained citizens and foreigners. Some members of the Shi'a minority continued to face institutionalized political and economic discrimination, including restrictions on the practice of their faith. According to reports, a number of Shi'a sheikhs were arrested and detained for violating restrictions on Shi'a religious practices.

Sudan. The Government continued to restrict the activities of Christians, followers of traditional indigenous religions, as well as some Islamic groups. Non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize, and apostasy is a capital offense. The Government restricted large religious assemblies, and visas for foreign Catholic priests were not renewed expeditiously. The Government's treatment of Islam as the state religion contributed to an atmosphere in which non-Muslims are treated as second class citizens. There continued to be reports that security forces harassed and arrested persons for religious beliefs and activities. Exacerbated by the civil war, the Government and government-supported forces were responsible for intentional bombings of civilian targets, the burning and looting of villages, and the killings, rapes, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of civilians, most of whom were practitioners of traditional indigenous religions or Christians. The forced abduction of women and children and the taking of slaves by slave raiders supported by the Government in war zones, and their transport to parts of central and northern Sudan and sometimes beyond, continued and was due in part to the victim's religious beliefs.

Turkmenistan. The Government's respect for freedom of religion deteriorated during the period covered by the report. Registration requirements are restrictive, preventing all religions except Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodoxy from registering. Harassment of unregistered religious groups, particularly evangelical Protestants, intensified to include several instances of torture, arrest, and seizure or destruction of property. Two Protestant congregations were evicted by the Ashgabat municipal government from the houses in which they held services. Four Baptists were tortured after religious literature was found in their car. Other religious groups also were targeted. The Government continued to control, and limit access to, Islamic education. Beginning in 1997, the Government began prohibiting mosque-based imams from teaching about Islam, and all Islamic education is now conducted in only one institution. The Government also continued to limit participation in the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, allowing travel for a number far fewer than the country's quota.

Uzbekistan. The Government continued its harsh campaign against unauthorized Islamic groups that it suspected of anti-State sentiments or activities, and arrested hundreds of alleged members of these groups and sentenced them to lengthy jail terms. The Government also imprisoned dozens of Muslims suspected of being "Wahabbist," a term used loosely to encompass both suspected terrorists and any former students of certain independent imams or foreign madrassas (Islamic schools). The number of Muslim prisoners remained high and court sentences often were severe, although the President recently criticized the courts for this practice and thousands of prisoners were released. There were credible reports that police mistreatment resulted in the deaths of persons in custody. Law enforcement officials regularly beat and tortured suspects held in pretrial detention including those accused of religious extremism to extract confessions. Severe mistreatment of convicted prisoners also is common. As religiously observant Muslim women—wives, mothers, daughters, sisters of husbands, sons, and brothers imprisoned—became more active during the year, authorities took steps to detain them as well, although most were released without charge. Many minority religions were able to worship without impediment; nevertheless, a number of minority religious groups, including a variety of Christian confessions, Baha'i, and Hare Krishna, had difficulty satisfying the strict registration requirements set out by the law.

STATE NEGLECT OF THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST, OR PERSECUTION OF, MINORITY OR NONAPPROVED RELIGIONS

In some countries, governments have laws or policies to discourage religious discrimination and persecution but fail to act with sufficient consistency and vigor against violations of religious freedom by nongovernmental entities or local law enforcement officials.

Egypt. Members of the non-Muslim minority generally were able to worship without interference, but there continued to be some governmental and societal discrimination. In January 2001, security authorities arrested 18 Egyptians, most of them Baha'is, on suspicion of "insulting religion;" 10 remained in detention without charge at the end of the period covered by this report. In addition several intellec-

tuals faced trial or charges related to writings or statements on the subject of religion. Government discrimination against some non-Muslims persisted. For example, despite some improvement, the approval process for church construction continued to be time-consuming and insufficiently responsive to the wishes of the Christian community. In February 2001, a criminal court acquitted 92 of 96 defendants suspected of crimes committed while participating in violence in the village of Al-Kush in January 2000 that resulted in the deaths of 20 Christians and 1 Muslim. Coptic authorities and civic society organizations believed the verdicts were inappropriately lenient; in response, the Egyptian government appealed the criminal court's ruling. On July 30, after the end of the period covered by this report, the Court of Cassation ordered a retrial of the 92 suspects who had been acquitted of participation in the violence in Al-Kush.

Anti-Semitism is found in the government press and increased in late 2000 and 2001 following the outbreak of violence in Israel and the occupied territories. The Government has advised journalists and cartoonists to avoid anti-Semitism.

India. Although senior members of the central Government reaffirmed India's constitutional commitment to secularism, the central Government was not always effective in countering attacks against religious minorities or attempts by state and local authorities to limit religious freedom. Tensions between Muslims and Hindus, and increasingly between Hindus and Christians, continued in several states, where personal and property disputes occasionally took on a religious coloration. Human rights groups and others suggested that the authorities in these states did not respond adequately to acts of violence against religious minorities by Hindu extremist groups, due at least in part to the perceived links such groups had with the leading party in the governing coalition. In November 2000 the Orissa state government began enforcing a provision of state law whereby religious conversions could not occur without the local police and district magistrate being notified. The need for a police officer's recommendation in effect placed the police as the sole arbitrator on an individual's right to freedom of religion in that state. There were numerous reports of human rights abuses carried out by security forces and local officials in Jammu and Kashmir against the Muslim population. With an apparent view toward driving non-Muslims from Kashmir, militants continued a campaign of violent, often brutal attacks. The Hindu group Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh incensed minority communities by publicly challenging the "Indian-ness" of religious minorities and advocating the "Indianization" of Islam and Christianity.

Indonesia. The Government continued to be incapable of controlling religious extremism or preventing the violence perpetrated and encouraged by radical groups claiming to represent certain religious views. This led to allegations that officials either were complicit in some of the incidents or, at a minimum, allowed them to occur with impunity. For example, religious intolerance manifested itself in killings and forced conversions in the Moluccas, in numerous attacks on churches in various locations throughout the country, and in repeated attacks on entertainment centers in Jakarta. Certain Government policies also contributed to religious discrimination. Minority religious groups complained of difficulties in obtaining permits to repair or construct churches. Adherents of nonrecognized religions told of problems in registering marriages and births. The Government granted Aceh Province the authority to implement certain aspects of Shari'a law and is considering broadening that authority. Other provincial parliaments were deliberating the possibility of imposing Shari'a, causing non-Muslims to fear that these efforts portend growing Islamic fundamentalism and a resulting deterioration in religious tolerance.

Nigeria. While the violence of early 2000 was not repeated during the period covered by this report, relations between Christians and Muslims remained uneasy and even tense in some parts of Nigeria. Although most of the conflict was interethnic rather than religious in origin, the return of criminal Shari'a law exacerbated tensions in some areas. Nine Northern states followed Zamfara State's lead and re-introduced most elements of criminal Shari'a. Shari'a law by definition applies only to Muslims, but some Northern Christians are concerned that their religious freedom may be infringed by this return to Islamic criminal law. In some states Shari'a criminal jurisdiction over Muslims is mandatory, while in others Muslims may elect to have their cases tried in common-law courts. This represents a change from past practice; previously Shari'a courts heard only Muslims' cases involving family and civil law matters. There were episodic minor conflicts between Christians and Muslims in several states considering the reintroduction of criminal Shari'a.

DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION OR POLICIES DISADVANTAGING CERTAIN RELIGIONS

Some governments have implemented laws or regulations that favor certain religions and place others at a disadvantage. Often this circumstance is the result of

the historical predominance of one religion in a country and may reflect broad social skepticism about new or minority religions. At times it stems from the emergence of a country from a long period of Communist rule, in which all religion was prohibited or, at best, out of favor. In such countries, skepticism or even the fear of certain religions or all religions lingers within segments of society. In some cases, this circumstance has led to a curtailment of religious freedom.

Belarus. The status of religious freedom worsened in Belarus. Head of State Alexander Lukashenka continued to pursue a deliberate policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church as the country's main religion, and the authorities increased harassment of other denominations and religions. Some of these, including many Protestant denominations, the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, and some eastern religions, were caught up in the restrictive circularity of repeatedly being denied registration by the regime because they did not have a legal address, while at the same time being refused—on the basis of not being registered—the leasing or return of property that could qualify as such a legal address or could provide a place to worship. Without registration, many of these groups found it difficult, if not impossible, to rent or purchase property to conduct religious services. Regime officials share societal anti-Semitic attitudes and took a number of actions that indicated hostility or insensitivity toward the Jewish community. In December 2000, a Minsk synagogue was fire-bombed and no discernible effort has been made by the authorities to find those responsible for the incident. Officially-sanctioned state newspaper and state television attacks on minority faiths also rose in frequency.

Brunei. Despite constitutional provisions providing for the exercise of religious freedom, the Government continued to restrict the practice of non-Muslim religions by prohibiting proselytizing of Muslims and occasionally denying entry to foreign clergy or particular priests, bishops, or ministers. The Government also has restricted importation of religious teaching materials or scriptures such as the bible and not given permission to expand, repair, or build new churches, temples, or shrines.

Bulgaria. Parliament deliberated extensively during the year on a proposed new law regulating religious organizations. The proposal, containing numerous provisions that would have limited religious freedom, was shelved. However, in response to some parliamentarians' insistence for similar legislation, a new religion law proposal was introduced in the newly elected parliament; however, no action had been taken by the end of the period covered by this report. In a number of Bulgarian cities (including Burgas, Pleven, and Stara Zagora), there was a trend toward the enactment of new ordinances aimed at curtailing religious freedom rights for certain religions. The national Government has on some occasions, but not systematically, stopped local governments from enforcing restrictive municipal government decisions; it also has pledged to promote greater tolerance among ethnic and religious groups. Relations between the major religious communities generally were amiable; however, public opinion and periodic media articles continued to suggest a somewhat hostile and alarmist attitude toward nontraditional religious groups, although there were fewer manifestations of this sentiment than in earlier years. The legal requirement obliging entities whose activities have a religious element to register with the Council of Ministers remained an obstacle to the activity of some religious groups. In contrast to earlier practice, there were no reported instances of any direct government, police, or societal harassment against religious workers or worshippers during the practice or propagation of their faith.

Eritrea. The Government continued to subject members of Jehovah's Witnesses to harsh treatment for their refusal to participate in national service and other civic duties. Most members of the group continued to be denied civil service employment, trading licenses, access to government-owned housing, passport, identity cards, and exit visas.

Georgia. Overall there was a deterioration in the status of religious freedom. Local police and security officials at times harassed "nontraditional" religious minority groups and were complicit in or failed to respond to violent attacks against Jehovah's Witnesses, Assembly of God followers, and other evangelical Christians. These attacks were conducted by followers of the ex-communicated priest Basil Mkalavishvili or by members of Jvari (The Cross), a Rustavi-based Georgian Orthodox group not directly affiliated with the "Basilists." The Interior Ministry (police) and Procuracy generally have failed to pursue criminal cases against Orthodox extremists for their attacks. The few investigations that have been opened are proceeding very slowly and at times have turned on the victims.

Israel and the Occupied Territories. Non-Jewish Israeli citizens, the majority of whom are Muslim, Christian, and Druze, continued to be subject to various forms of discrimination. Government funding to the various religious sectors is disproportional.

tionate, tending to favor Jewish citizens. Some Jewish and Arab groups have objected to the Government's policy of designating nationality on national identity cards. Many Jewish citizens objected to the fact that Orthodox Jewish religious authorities have exclusive control over Jewish marriages, divorces, and burials. The ongoing violence and the Israeli Government's closure policy of the occupied territories prevented a number of Palestinians and Israelis from reaching their places of worship in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government have prohibited non-Muslims from entering the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount). Since the outbreak of the Intifada, the rhetoric of some Jewish and Muslim religious leaders was harsh and at times constituted an incitement to violence.

Jordan. Some religious denominations, including the Druze, Baha'i, and certain Christian groups, have not been accorded official recognition. Consequently members of these unrecognized religious groups and religious converts faced legal discrimination and bureaucratic difficulties in personal status cases, which are adjudicated in Muslim Shari'a courts.

Malaysia. Islam is the official religion, and the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly. For Muslims, particularly ethnic Malays, the right to leave the Islamic faith and adhere to another religion is a controversial right, and in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change religions, as evidenced by a recent court ruling that an ethnic Malay is defined by the federal Constitution as "a person who professes the religion of Islam." Proselytizing of Muslims by members of other religions is prohibited, although proselytizing of non-Muslims faces no obstacles. The Government generally respects non-Muslims' right of worship; however, state governments carefully control the building of non-Muslim places of worship and the allocation of land for non-Muslim cemeteries and were very slow in granting approvals for such permits. The Government continued to monitor the activities of the Shi'a minority and periodically detained members of what it considers Islamic "deviant sects" without trial or charge.

Romania. Government registration and recognition requirements still pose obstacles to minority religions. Following the accession to power of the left-center Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR) in December 2000, reorganization and staffing of the new Government has put on hold many religious initiatives. While the new Government eased distinctions between types of places of worship that could be constructed by recognized and unrecognized religions, new requirements for construction of these churches may make the process more difficult for minority religions. Progress on restitution of properties slowed under the PDSR Government. In February 2001, the PDSR Government sent proposed revisions to the current law on religious denominations to the 15 recognized religions for comment. Though different from the bill the previous Government had withdrawn in February 2000 (after strong objections by non-Orthodox religious groups and human rights groups), most minority religious groups repeated their critical views and the Government did not submit the text to Parliament. Government officials expect the bill to be submitted to Parliament in the fall of 2001 at the earliest.

Russia. Implementation of the more restrictive 1997 Law on Religion, which replaced a more liberal 1990 law, continued to be a source of serious concern. Some local and regional officials used the law to restrict the rights of groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and the Salvation Army, by refusing to register them even though those groups were registered at the Federal level and in many other localities. There were allegations of politically motivated government interference in the internal affairs of the Jewish, Pentecostal, and Muslim communities. The Government was slow to condemn some anti-Semitic acts and vandalism or to arrest the perpetrators. Muslims, who constitute approximately 10 percent of the population, encountered registration problems along with societal discrimination and antagonism in some areas, apparently as a result of feelings engendered by the continuing conflict in Chechnya.

Turkey. Some Christians and Baha'is faced social and government harassment, including detentions for alleged proselytizing or unauthorized meetings. A Muslim cleric was arrested in June 2001 for insulting the Government, holding an illegal religious meeting, and wearing prohibited religious clothing. An intense debate continues over the government ban on wearing Muslim religious dress in state facilities, including universities. The Government, especially the National Security Council, continued to press for measures to combat "Islamic fundamentalism" or "reactionism" and sought to punish the prominent leader of an Islamic religious community for alleged anti-state behavior. In June 2001, the Constitutional Court banned the Islamist-led Fazilet (Virtue) party, Turkey's largest opposition political group, for anti-secular activities and expelled two members from Parliament.

Yugoslavia. The overall status of respect for religious freedom by both the Federal and Serbian Republic Governments improved somewhat, following the electoral victory of Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition in September 2000. Officials of the new Government expressed a commitment to improving respect for human rights and eliminating discrimination; however, in practice the new Government has provided preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church. There were some instances of societal discrimination against religious minorities in Serbia. In Kosovo Albanian Muslims attacked Orthodox Serbs in retribution for the massive human rights abuses conducted by Yugoslav and Serbian authorities against Albanians prior to June 1999. In Montenegro tensions between the Montenegrin Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church continued and were politicized by opposing political factions, despite the Montenegrin Government's attempts to moderate the situation.

STIGMATIZATION OF CERTAIN RELIGIONS BY WRONGFULLY ASSOCIATING THEM WITH DANGEROUS "CULTS" OR "SECTS"

The governments of a few countries, in an attempt to protect their citizens from dangerous or harmful groups, have adopted discriminating laws and policies. By blurring the distinctions between religions and violent or fraudulent groups, the governments of these countries have disadvantaged groups that may appear to be different or unusual, but are in fact peaceful and straightforward. In all of these countries, existing criminal law is sufficient to address criminal behavior by groups of individuals. New laws or policies that criminalize or stigmatize religious expression can put religious freedom at risk.

Austria. The Government continued its information campaign against religious sects considered potentially harmful to the interests of individuals and society. In 1999 the Ministry for Social Security and Generations issued a new edition of a controversial brochure that described numerous nonrecognized religious groups in negative terms, which many of the groups deemed offensive. This brochure includes information on Jehovah's Witnesses, despite its status as a confessional community. The Federal Office on Sects continues to collect and distribute information on organizations considered sects. Under the law, this office has independent status, but its head is appointed and supervised by the Minister for Social Security and Generations.

In 1998 the Education Ministry granted Jehovah's Witnesses the status of a confessional community and the group immediately requested that it be recognized as a religious group under the 1874 law. The Education Ministry denied the application on the basis that, as a confessional community, Jehovah's Witnesses would need to submit to the required 10-year observation period. In April 2001, the Constitutional Court upheld the Education Ministry's finding. Jehovah's Witnesses filed an appeal with the Administrative Court, arguing that the law is illegal on administrative grounds. The group also has filed an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Despite initial fears that the inclusion of the Freedom Party (FPO) in government would lead to a decrease in tolerance for nonrecognized religious groups, the situation regarding religious freedom did not change significantly during the period covered by this report. In April 2000, then Minister for Social Security and Generations, Elisabeth Sickl (FPO), announced increased measures to "protect citizens from the damaging influence of sects, cults, and esoteric movements"; however, no new measures were implemented during her tenure. Sickl left office in October 2000 and her successor has announced no new initiatives on this subject.

Belgium. The Parliament established a special commission in 1996 to investigate the dangers posed by cults and sects, especially to children, and to recommend policies to deal with those dangers. The commission released a report in 1997 that described "harmful sectarian organizations." To implement one of the report's recommendations, in May 1998 Parliament passed legislation creating a "Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations." The Center opened its offices in September 2000 and is now fully operational. Parliament passed legislation in October 1998 creating an interagency body that works in conjunction with the Center and includes representatives from law enforcement agencies as well as a number of government ministries. A subgroup of law enforcement officials meets bi-monthly to exchange information on sect activities. The Government has designated one national magistrate in the District Court of First Instance and one local magistrate in each of the 27 judicial districts to monitor cases involving sects.

Some recognized religions complain of incidents of religious discrimination. For example, leaders of the Muslim Executive Council report that women and girls wearing traditional dress or headscarves in some cases face discrimination in em-

ployment and public and private school admissions, even though the law does not prohibit such dress.

The police raided the Church of Scientology's Brussels headquarters for the second time on February 8, 2001, at which time additional documents were seized. Most of the computer equipment seized in a previous raid has been returned to the Church, but the documents still are held by the investigating magistrate. The Government has refused to provide additional information on the case since it is still under investigation. On March 6, 2001, the Church of Scientology filed a formal complaint against the Government with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

France. In 1996 the Gest or Guyard Commission (named for its chairman and rapporteur, respectively) issued a report that identified 173 groups as cults, including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Theological Institute of Nimes, and the Church of Scientology. The Government has not outlawed any of the groups on the list; however, members of some of the groups listed have alleged instances of intolerance due to the ensuing publicity and a perception that the groups on the list are potentially harmful.

The Government's Observatory on Sects/Cults was created in 1996 to analyze the phenomenon of cults and to develop proposals for dealing with them. In 1998 the Government issued a decree disbanding the Observatory and creating an Interministerial Mission in the Fight Against Sects/Cults, which is responsible for coordinating periodic interministerial meetings at which government officials can exchange information and coordinate their actions.

The 1905 law on the separation of church and state makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith; however, recent legislation has the potential to place religious freedom at risk. The new "About-Picard" law provides for the dissolution of associations (including religious associations) whose leaders have two or more convictions on any of a variety of offenses, some of which are worded ambiguously, such as "psychological or physical subjection" or "fraudulent abuse of a state of ignorance or weakness." Although the law applies to any legal entity, it may have been inspired by concerns over new and less familiar religions in France. The Senate and the National Assembly voted in favor of the About-Picard legislation in May 2001 and on June 14, 2001, the President signed it into law. To date there have been no cases brought under the About-Picard law.

Germany. The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom; however, the Government does not recognize Scientology as a religion and views it as an economic enterprise. Concerns that Scientology's ideology is opposed to a democratic state have led to the screening of firms and individuals in some sectors of business and employment. The federal and state Offices for the Protection of the Constitution, "watchdog" agencies tasked with monitoring groups whose ideologies are deemed to be counter to the democratic order, have been "investigating" the Church of Scientology and Scientologists for approximately 4 years. During that time there have been no prosecutions or convictions of Scientology officials in the country, and the investigation has uncovered no concrete evidence that the Church is a "security" threat.

In 1997 the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin upheld a decision of the 1993 Berlin State government not to grant "public law corporation" status to the Jehovah's Witnesses, on the grounds that they did not offer "indispensable loyalty" to the democratic state. On December 19, 2000, upon appeal, the Constitutional Court found in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses, remanding the case back to the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin. For the first time, the Constitutional Court had examined the conditions for granting the status of a public law corporation and found that for reasons of the separation of church and state, "loyalty to the state" cannot be a condition imposed on religious communities. The Constitutional Court tempered the victory for Jehovah's Witnesses by instructing the Berlin Administrative Court to examine whether Jehovah's Witnesses use coercive methods to prevent their members from leaving the congregation and whether their child-rearing practices conform to German human rights standards. The case had not been resolved by the end of the period covered by this report.

Part II: Positive Developments in the Area of Religious Freedom

The International Religious Freedom Act prescribes a section of the Executive Summary that identifies foreign countries in which there has been a "significant improvement in the protection and promotion" of religious freedom and includes a description of the nature of the improvement as well as an analysis of the factors contributing to it. This report identifies one country in which significant measures have been taken to promote religious freedom. Also mentioned are several other countries

in which positive steps have been taken. As elaborated elsewhere in the Executive Summary and in the country chapters, there remain significant problems of religious discrimination or abuse in some of these countries. It is our hope that these countries will continue to pursue measures that will remove barriers to religious freedom.

Further information on actions by the U.S. Government in these countries also may be found in the respective country chapters.

SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mexico. In the period covered by this report, the Government held over 80 meetings with representatives from various religions to discuss issues of mutual concern, aimed at fostering a greater understanding at national and local levels of the need to uphold religious freedom and support religious tolerance. In November 2000, the Government signed agreements with six southern states to promote prompt, efficient, and coordinated action in religious affairs, particularly those involving conflicts stemming from religious intolerance. Federal authorities actively collaborated with state officials in the state of Chiapas to reduce tensions caused by religious conflicts. The Government further reduced the difficulties experienced in past years by religious groups to bring in personnel. Syncretist Catholics and Protestant evangelicals in at least 20 parishes are cooperating on development projects that serve their entire communities. Protestant Evangelical and Catholic representatives in Oaxaca ended 47 years of tension between their communities by signing a peace accord in Santiago Jaltepec.

In support of the Government's effort, U.S. Embassy staff met frequently with officials in the Subsecretariat for Religious Affairs within the Secretariat of Government. Embassy representatives met religious leaders throughout the country, including the Cardinal of Guadalajara, the Vicar and the Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, and leaders of the Chiapas-based Buen Samaritano Evangeli Group. The Embassy discussed religious freedom issues with the National Human Rights Commission, the president of the Evangelical Commission in Defense of Human Rights and the Mexican Episcopal Conference (Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference). Embassy staff also visited the Director General of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and representatives of U.S. faith-based organizations in Mexico City to become familiar with their concerns.

POSITIVE STEPS IN RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The countries listed below differ in the wide range of problems they face involving religious freedom. Some have significant problems of religious discrimination or abuse. What they have in common is the fact that in one way or another, either through efforts on the part of the Government or of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), they have taken some positive step or steps in the area of religious freedom.

Argentina. In May 2001, a non-governmental organization, the Interfaith Center for Social Responsibility, officially was launched in a ceremony that took place in the National Congressional Chambers. The board of this entity is made up of religious leaders from Jewish, Catholic, Methodist, and Muslim faith communities. Their goal is to reach, inform and mobilize people to take social action, primarily through their religious organizations.

Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan continues the steady progress toward religious freedom, as some government officials continued to express public support of religious freedom and tolerance, an attitude initiated by President Heyder Aliyev in November 1999 when he announced Azerbaijan's commitment to international standards for religious freedom. In May 2001, Speaker of the Parliament Murtuz Aleskerov encouraged acceptance of citizens who had converted to Christianity. As a result of the Government's positive change in policy, the Jehovah's Witnesses commended the Government of Azerbaijan in an April 2001 letter to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Significant progress was made during the period covered by this report in reconstruction of ethnic minority religious sites deliberately destroyed by ethnic cleansing during the war. This included both ground-breaking ceremonies and actual openings of mosques and churches in areas such as Banja Luka, Gradiska, and Prijedor. Leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities have committed themselves publicly to building a durable peace and national reconciliation. The leaders of these four communities are members of the Interreligious Affairs Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operates with the active involvement of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE) and OHR facilitate interfaith meetings at the local level as well. On June 8, 2001 in Rome, the Catholic conflict resolution group Sant'Egidio hosted a conference on religious reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities sent representatives to the conference, which released a joint statement supporting reconstruction of all religious sites in the country.

Czech Republic. The Government made significant progress in resolving religious-based communal and personal property restitution issues, especially with regard to Jewish property. In July 2000, Parliament passed a law establishing a commission to document the status of former Jewish communal property and, to a limited extent, personal property, and to make recommendations to the Government. The law authorized the return of 200 communal Jewish properties in state hands and also authorized the return of over 2,500 works of art to individual Jewish citizens, their descendants, and the Jewish community. A fourth provision of the law authorized the return of certain agricultural property in the Government's possession to its original owners.

Equatorial Guinea. As of January 2001, the Government no longer requires that Catholic priests obtain government permission before celebrating Mass. This restriction had been put in place in previous years because of the Catholic Church's repeated criticisms of human rights violations, social injustice, and corruption in the country.

Eritrea. Church leaders of most denominations, in particular, leaders of the Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant denominations, meet routinely and engage in ongoing efforts to foster cooperation and understanding between religions, with the major exception of Jehovah's Witnesses. In July 2000, in Oslo, Norway, these leaders met with their Ethiopian counterparts for the fourth time in an ecumenical peace effort to resolve the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict.

Hungary. In April 2001, Parliament rejected a proposed law that would have tightened regulations on establishing religious organizations. According to the government, the main purpose of the law was to close certain loopholes by which some people are able to disguise economic activity with a religious guise. A major factor leading to rejection of the proposal was that its attempt to define religion would have undermined freedom of religion in Hungary.

Indonesia. Interfaith organizations increased and became more active. The Indonesian Peace Forum (FID), formed immediately following the December church bombings, brought together moderate leaders from all of the country's major religions. FID leaders, many of them prominent Muslims, deplored the attacks on the churches, called for a thorough government investigation, and formed their own investigative team. FID also sponsored a number of events to foster religious respect and an end to interreligious, ethnic, and separatist conflicts. Other similar organizations also hosted national and regional seminars to promote interfaith dialog and religious tolerance.

Jordan. In addition to the ongoing work by the two major government-sponsored institutions that promote interfaith understanding, the Government facilitated the holding of two international Christian conferences in government facilities in September 2000 and May 2001.

Kazakhstan. In April 2001, as part of its campaign to prevent the development of religious extremism, the Government sent to Parliament a draft series of amendments to the National Religion Law that would have placed significant restrictions on religious freedom. It included provisions to ban "extremist religious associations"; increase from 10 to 50 the number of members required to file for registration of a religious organization; limit the right of registration for Muslim groups to those "recommended" by the Mufti's organization; forbid missionary activities, including charity and activities conducted by citizens that are not formally declared to local authorities in advance; prohibit giving children a religious education or bringing them into religious groups against their will; and authorize local officials to suspend the activities of religious groups that conduct a religious activity outside of the place where they are registered. Following objections by religious and human rights organizations, foreign governments, and international organizations that the amendments would violate the country's constitution and its international commitments, the Government withdrew the draft amendments at the end of June 2001.

Kenya. In December 1999, a group of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders provided an example of interfaith cooperation for participation in civil society by forming an alternative process to reform the Constitution, the Ufungamano Initiative. The Initiative, which originally opposed the Parliament-led process, merged with the Government-backed Parliamentary process in March 2001. In May the President approved the merger, which should facilitate efforts to advance constitutional reform.

Mozambique. In November 2000, various religious and civic society organizations, such as the League of Human Rights, the Islamic Council, the Christian Council, and the Bar Association formed a Civil Society Commission. The body investigated the deaths from asphyxiation of approximately 100 prisoners in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado. The Catholic Church and Caritas International, citing the country's successful transition from war to "peaceful communal living," hosted a conference in August 2000 in Maputo on peace and justice. The Catholic Church also published pastoral letters encouraging the faltering dialog between Frelimo and Renamo; strongly criticizing the November 2000 deaths of the approximately 100 prisoners in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado noted above; and strongly criticizing a rise in criminality and corruption, including the November 2000 killing of renowned journalist Carlos Cardoso.

Nigeria. Governor Makarfi of Kaduna state, a locality that had suffered loss of life in ethno/religious-based riots, visited many southern and middle-belt states to apologize to persons, originally from those areas who had fled Kaduna, for the loss of life during the Kaduna riots, to emphasize the importance of respecting diversity in Nigeria's multiethnic and multireligious society, and to encourage those who had left the state to return. In September 2000, Gombe state governor Abubakar Hashidu set up a judicial commission of inquiry, composed of Muslims and Christians, to investigate the causes of the religious clash that took place in the city of Bambam in 2000. Federal government officials and state governors of Zamfara, Sokoto, Kano, and Kaduna states met with a variety of U.S. government officials to discuss the 2000 religious riots, the enactment of Shari'a law, and ways to allay minority religious group concerns.

Peru. The Catholic Church is the most politically active religious denomination and has significant political influence. During the period covered by this report, at the request of the Government, and because of the Church's reputation for honesty, prominent members of the Church played a pivotal role in democratization and anti-corruption initiatives.

Poland. Polish authorities reacted quickly to sporadic incidents of harassment and violence against Jews and vandalism of Jewish and Catholic cemeteries, mostly generated by skinheads and other marginal elements of society. Government authorities consistently criticized such actions and pledged to prevent similar acts in the future.

Russia. In contrast to the reluctance of the previous administration to address the issue, President Putin and his administration took a very public stand against anti-Semitism, and the presidential administration and other government officials increasingly were vocal about the need for societal tolerance in a multiethnic and multiconfessional society.

Rwanda. Rwanda saw improvements this year, such as the lifting of restrictions on Jehovah's Witnesses meeting and preaching publicly, the release of Jehovah's Witnesses in detention, and improved relations between the Catholic Church and the Government. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had stopped restricting religious meetings at night, and had lifted local restrictions on meetings for worship and proselytizing. Senior government officials intervened personally with local officials to ensure that religious freedom is respected at all government levels, and local church members reported that harassment of members by local officials has ceased and that they now enjoy religious freedom. Senior clergy of the Catholic Church reported that relations between the Church and the Government had improved because of collaboration and dialog in the areas of education and reconciliation. The Church and the Government moved closer to a resolution of the question of using churches as genocide memorials, and several churches were reconsecrated and returned to serving the community.

Part III: U.S. Actions to Promote International Religious Freedom

The promotion of religious freedom involves far more than the public airing of violations. Productive work often is done behind the scenes, for the very simple reason that governments or nations are unlikely to respond positively when rebuked in public.

However, it is sometimes necessary for the United States, and the international community, openly to denounce particularly abhorrent behavior by another nation. The 1998 International Religious Freedom Act mandates Presidential action in cases of particularly egregious violations of religious freedom, although it grants considerable flexibility in deciding on what action to take. Thus in September 2000, the Secretary of State, acting under the authority of the President, designated five countries—Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan—as "countries of particular concern" under the Act for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations.

In addition, the Secretary identified Serbia and the Taliban regime of Afghanistan as having committed similar violations.

In general the best public method of promoting religious freedom is to advocate the universal principles—in particular the inviolable dignity of the human person—that are nourished when religious freedom is valued and protected. This approach continues to be integrated into public U.S. foreign policy channels, through international exchanges, Worldnet and Voice of America broadcasts, a religious freedom web site in the home page of the Department of State, conferences, public opinion polling, Congressional hearings, and speeches and press conferences by senior U.S. foreign policy officials.

Throughout the world, our overseas diplomatic missions are our front line in promoting the right of religious freedom and opposing violations of that right. Frequently the Chief of Mission has led the way, but other members of our missions do their part in pursuing these goals. U.S. Mission efforts inevitably are centered on human rights officers, as well as consular officers, who serve as the eyes and ears of the mission in its search for information, and its voice in the advocacy of religious freedom. Their work is facilitated by the wisdom and practical knowledge of local national embassy staff colleagues, whose contributions to international religious freedom frequently advance the interests of the United States. Public affairs officers coordinate the vital work of public diplomacy in order to present U.S. policy with accuracy and thoroughness.

No less important is the tone and context set by senior U.S. officials when they speak publicly on the subject of religious freedom, or privately with foreign heads of government and other policy makers. The President, the Secretary of State, and many senior State Department officials have addressed the issue in venues throughout the world. Within the United States, a critical role is played by the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the agencies responsible for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers who are fleeing religious persecution. The Department of State is responsible for training some of the officials who interview refugee applicants; the Department of Justice is responsible for training those officials who interview both refugee and asylum applicants, and those who adjudicate their cases (see Appendices).

The fulcrum of the effort to promote religious freedom lies in a State Department office established in the summer of 1998, and further mandated by the International Religious Freedom Act—the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The office is headed by an Ambassador-at-Large who serves as the principal advisor to the President and the Secretary of State on religious freedom. The Ambassador at Large recommends U.S. policies on religious freedom and oversees the implementation of those policies, both in the United States and worldwide. With the Ambassador lies the task of integrating U.S. policy on religious freedom into the mainstream of U.S. foreign policy, and—at the same time—into the structure of the Foreign Service and the Department of State.

The Secretary of State, through the Offices of International Religious Freedom and Country Reports and Asylum Affairs (both in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor), is responsible for preparing the annual report to Congress on the status of religious freedom worldwide. In carrying out this task, the Bureau draws on U.S. mission reporting, visits by the Ambassador-at-Large and his staff to individual countries, participation in multilateral meetings and conferences, and on evidence provided by religious and human rights NGO's, religious organizations and individuals.

Monitoring and reporting also are guided by the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (CIRF), established by the 1998 Act. The Commission, whose members are appointed by Congress and the President, is independent from the Department of State. The CIRF produces its own report and recommends to the President and the Secretary of State the designation of certain countries as Countries of Particular Concern. Many of the accomplishments and initiatives of the CIRF are contained in this report's country chapters, each of which broadly addresses U.S. efforts to promote religious freedom.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The United States has done much in the last year to promote freedom of religion and conscience for all people, and increasingly has become active in promoting religious freedom abroad. The Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom traveled to more than a dozen countries during the period covered by this report. Religious freedom issues were discussed in countries as diverse as Belgium, India, Nigeria, Russia, China, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Additionally U.S. embassies raised religious freedom issues at the highest levels of government and in multilat-

eral fora, such as the 57th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in April 2001.

Both President Bush and Secretary of State Powell reiterated the U.S. Government's commitment to supporting international religious freedom. At the National Prayer Breakfast on February 1, 2001, the President pointed out the crucial contributions that faith can make to a nation: justice, compassion, and promoting a civil and generous society. In remarks made on May 3, 2001, to the American Jewish Committee, he condemned abuses against religious groups in several countries. Calling the freedom of religion the "first freedom of the human soul," he declared that the U.S. should speak for that freedom in the world.

In testimony to Congress during his confirmation hearing and on similar occasions afterwards, Secretary of State Powell confirmed the U.S. Government's intent to continue supporting the full range of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion and conscience. In Washington and in other capitals around the world, the Secretary emphasized to foreign leaders the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes the right to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

Secretary Albright took formal action against certain countries last year. In 2000 the Secretary again designated Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan as "countries of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for engaging in or tolerating "particularly severe violations" of religious freedom. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was, as a matter of policy, also identified for the second consecutive year as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom, though it cannot be designated as a "country of particular concern" because it is not a government recognized by the United States. Secretary Albright removed in January 2001 the formal identification of the Milosevic regime in Yugoslavia—identified in 1999 and 2000 as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom—after Vojislav Kostunica was elected president.

The following section summarizes some of the many efforts undertaken by various elements of the U.S. Government's foreign policy community to promote religious freedom. It is by no means exhaustive; rather, it endeavors to provide by way of illustrative examples a portrait of U.S. actions. Further details may be found in the individual country chapters.

Afghanistan. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated the Taliban regime, which controls most of Afghanistan, as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom.

Argentina. The U.S. Embassy continued to assist with the Government's implementation of a Holocaust Education Project carried out under the auspices of the International Holocaust Education Task Force. In April and May 2001, the Embassy co-sponsored with the Simon Wiesenthal Center an exhibit on the Holocaust titled "The Courage to Remember."

Armenia. Embassy officials met with the State Council on Religions to urge that progress be made towards registering Jehovah's Witnesses. The Embassy also maintained regular contact with the Catholicosate at Echmiatsin and with leaders of other major religious and ecumenical groups in the country, as well as with traveling regional representatives of foreign-based religious groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, and raised their concerns with the Government. U.S. officials met with representatives of faith-based groups which have followers in Armenia as well as with representatives of the Armenian government.

Austria. In September 2000, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a resolution criticizing Austria and other countries because of "conscious propaganda" against religious minorities. In October 2000, the Director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom traveled to Vienna to discuss religious freedom issues with government officials and religious representatives. In March 2001, the U.S. Government issued a statement strongly criticizing Joerg Haider's verbal attack against the leader of the country's Jewish community. The Ambassador met with the Chancellor and the Minister for Social Security and Generations to press U.S. views on the problems inherent in the country's laws on religion as well as U.S. views on the work of the Austrian Government's office on sects.

Azerbaijan. Throughout the year, U.S. Embassy officers and the Ambassador communicated their concerns about reported violations of the law on religion to representatives of the Department of Religious Affairs, its successor, the State Commission for Work with Religious Structures, Parliament, and the presidential administration. Embassy officers also traveled to the regions to speak directly with local authorities and religious groups who reported harassment. The Embassy maintains a number of contacts with senior Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders in Azerbaijan.

Belarus. In July 2000, following the arrest of BOAC priest Spasyuk, representatives of the U.S. Embassy met with government officials to press for his release and to urge authorities to respect the rights of the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church parishioners to gather and worship. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy had frequent contacts with leaders and members of religious communities and worked with Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) representatives to promote religious freedom. In Washington officials of the Department of State met on a number of occasions with representatives of the Government of Belarus to raise issues in support of religious freedom and other human rights concerns.

Belgium. In October 2000, the Director of the State Department's Office of Religious Freedom traveled to Brussels and met with the director of the Belgian Government's Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations. There he expressed U.S. concern that the very existence of a government-mandated agency to provide information on "harmful" organizations strongly suggests an official judgment that the groups on which it maintains data are in fact "harmful," which in turn could have a chilling effect on religious freedom in Belgium.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. The U.S. Government provided financial support to the Government's Human Rights Chamber, which hears cases on religious discrimination. The Ambassador frequently met with the principal religious leaders, individually and collectively, to urge them to work toward moderation and tolerance between ethnic communities. In addition the Embassy publicly condemned instances of religious discrimination or attacks against religious communities or buildings, and encouraged leaders from all ethnic groups and members of the international community to speak out as well. The U.S. Agency for International Development provided funding to train lawyers and judges concerning human rights, including religious freedom.

Bulgaria. The Embassy remained engaged closely with the Government and Parliament in discussions of a proposed law on religious denominations that could have created serious religious freedom concerns. The Ambassador met with senior members of the Government and Parliament to convey the U.S. Government's concern about many aspects of the proposal. After the Embassy's repeated urging to seek the view of outside religion law scholars, Parliament forwarded the draft to the Council of Europe for review and comment. Action on the law was deferred indefinitely.

Burma. Embassy staff met repeatedly with leaders of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic religious groups, members of the faculties of schools of theology, and other religious-affiliated organizations and NGO's to discuss religious freedom and other human rights issues. In 1999 and also in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Burma as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

China. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The U.S. Government, Department of State, U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and U.S. Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang all made concerted efforts to encourage greater religious freedom during the year. The Department of State sent a number of Chinese religious leaders and scholars to the U.S. on international visitor programs to observe the role that religion plays in the United States. The Embassy also brought experts on religion from the United States to China to speak about the role of religion in American life and public policy. In March 2001, Chinese officials refused to meet with U.S. diplomats from the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom during their visit to China to examine the situation of religious liberty. Nevertheless U.S. officials in Washington and Beijing continued to protest Chinese Government actions to curb religious freedom, including the destruction of unregistered places of worship in Wenzhou, the arrests of followers of the Falun Gong spiritual movement, the crackdowns on Tibetan Buddhists and on Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, and the arrests of Christian ministers and believers. The lack of improvement in religious freedom in China was a key factor in the U.S. decision to introduce again a resolution critical of China's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

Egypt. The subject of religious freedom was raised by all levels of the U.S. Government, including by the President, Secretary of State, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, and the Ambassador. In addition visiting congressional delegations raised religious freedom issues during visits with government officials. In January 2001, the Director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom visited the country and met with government officials and community activists. The Embassy investigated every complaint of religious discrimination

brought to its attention. During a public speech in March 2001, the Ambassador criticized anti-Semitism in the media. The Embassy also supported efforts to strengthen civil society, including training for nongovernmental organizations that promote religious tolerance.

France. Embassy officers met several times with government officials and members of Parliament and also with a variety of private citizens, religious organizations, and NGO's involved in the issue of religious freedom. U.S. Senators also discussed religious freedom issues with senior government officials during visits United States.

Georgia. Senior U.S. Government officials raised U.S. concerns about harassment of and attacks against "non-traditional" religious minorities with senior Georgian government officials, including the President, Parliament Speaker, and Internal Affairs and Justices Ministers. The U.S. Ambassador also raised this issue with the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Embassy officials regularly met with representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptist Church, and Assemblies of God, as well as with NGO's concerned with religious freedom.

Germany. The U.S. Government expressed its concerns to state and federal authorities over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible Scientology affiliation. In these discussions, U.S. officials pointed out that the use of so-called "sect filters" to prevent persons from practicing their professions is an abuse of their rights, as well as a discriminatory business practice. The government of Germany subsequently changed the language of its sect filters, so that firms owned, managed by, or employing Scientologists could bid on government contracts.

India. U.S. Embassy and consulate officials engaged with important leaders of all the significant minority communities. The NGO community in the country is extremely active with regard to religious freedom, and mission officers met with local NGO's regularly. In December 2000, a U.S. diplomat with the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom visited Delhi and Mumbai to meet with Hindu, Christian and Muslim leaders, human rights activists, and government officials about religious freedom issues and U.S. commitment to help protect it. In early January 2001, Senator Arlen Specter visited New Delhi and Udaipur and inquired about reports of attacks on Christian minority members in India. In February 2001, Congressmen Royce, Bonior, McDermott, and Pitts met with members of the Christian community to discuss efforts to help victims of the Gujarat earthquake in a secular and fair manner, and to discuss particular concerns of various denominations of the Christian community.

Indonesia. By supporting workshops, conferences, speaker programs, Fulbright scholars, and visits by Indonesians to the U.S., Embassy and USAID officials worked with Indonesian and international NGO's to develop methods to mitigate religious conflict and to combat religious intolerance. U.S. government officials expressed serious concern over the forced conversions of Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas. The Embassy and USAID supported local NGO and Indonesian government efforts to bring victims of forced conversions to Jakarta to testify before human rights organizations and Indonesian government officials. The Embassy and USAID worked with the Asia Foundation and the State Institute of Islamic Studies in Jakarta to develop a new course stressing tolerance and respect for human rights. USAID funded public service announcements promoting interfaith tolerance that were broadcast on major commercial and government television stations from January to March 2001. The Embassy also encouraged Indonesian government officials to lift restrictions against the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Iran. Since 1982 the U.S. Government has co-sponsored each year since 1982 a resolution regarding the human rights situation in Iran offered by the European Union at the annual meeting of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. The United States has supported a similar resolution offered each year during the U.N. General Assembly. The U.S. Government has supported strongly the work of the U.N. Special Representative on Human Rights for Iran and called on the Iranian Government to grant him admission and allow him to conduct his research (he has been denied entry visas since 1996). In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Iran as a "country of particular concern."

Iraq. The Secretary of State designated Iraq a "country of particular concern" in 1999 and 2000.

Israel. The U.S. Embassy consistently raised issues of religious freedom with the Government at working levels with the Foreign Ministry, the police, and the Prime Minister's office. The Ambassador and other Embassy representatives routinely met with Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i leaders, as well as with NGO's that follow human rights and religious freedom issues, such as the Association for Civil

Rights in Israel, the Israel Religious Action Center, Adalah, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, and the Anti-Defamation League.

Jordan. In January 2001, the Embassy sponsored a program on interreligious dialog and tolerance. Embassy officers assisted private religious groups to obtain official registration.

Kazakhstan. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Embassy, as well as senior State Department officials, lobbied intensively against the draft amendments to the National Religion Law. The Embassy coordinated closely with the OSCE Center in Almaty in arranging for an expert evaluation of the amendments. The Embassy's Charge d'Affaires and human rights officer joined two OSCE delegations that presented the evaluation to officials. The human rights officer also met frequently with human rights activists and representatives of many churches concerned about the draft amendments. He shared information with the UK-based Keston Institute, which publicized the debate over the draft amendments in its internationally distributed publications. These efforts, combined with those of religious and other human rights organizations and foreign governments, contributed to the Government's decision to withdraw the amendments at the end of June 2001. In other actions, the Embassy actively assisted the American citizens in Aktau who were ultimately expelled from the country for allegedly illegal religious activities. In May 2001, the Embassy sponsored the 10-day visit of a U.S. academic expert on Islam to conduct a series of programs on the role of Islam in a secular society.

Laos. The Charge d'Affaires and other Embassy representatives raised high profile cases with high-ranking MFA officials and relevant provincial governors. Embassy representatives also met with major religious leaders in the country and otherwise encouraged religious freedom despite an environment restricted by the government-owned and government-controlled media. In December 2000 and June 2001, the Embassy helped to facilitate the visit of a representative of the Institute for Global Engagement, a private foundation promoting religious freedom and interdenominational dialog, who had frank exchanges with Lao officials.

Nigeria. In September 2000, a representative from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom traveled to northern Nigeria. He visited five states, where he discussed with religious leaders and government officials religious freedom issues to better understand the dynamics of interreligious conflict in the context of the implementation of Shari'a in northern Nigeria. Embassy officers maintained an ongoing dialogue with religious leaders and government officials in order to promote religious freedom.

Saudi Arabia. Senior U.S. government officials raised the issue of religious freedom with government officials on numerous occasions. Officials from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom met with senior government officials to confirm the Government's commitment to permit private non-Muslim worship and to discuss other concerns related to religious freedom. U.S. Embassy officers met with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials to deliver and discuss the U.S. Government's 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom and to protest the detention of Filipino worshippers.

Sudan. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Sudan as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Tajikistan. The U.S. Embassy supported programs designed to create a better understanding of how democracies address the issue of secularism and religious freedom. Several participants in these programs are key members of the opposition who now, through their writings and their debate on the definition of secularism, reveal a more sophisticated understanding of the concept and of how secularism and religious activism can coexist in a free society.

Vietnam. The U.S. Ambassador raised religious freedom issues with senior cabinet ministers including the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, senior Government and Communist Party advisors, the head of the Government's Office of Religion, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Security, and the chairpersons of Provincial People's Committees around the country. Other Embassy and Consulate General officials also raised U.S. concerns on religious freedom with senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security and with provincial officials. Department of State officials in Washington commented publicly on the status of religious freedom in Vietnam on several occasions, and President Clinton commented on human rights in general and freedom of religion in particular during his historic visit to Vietnam in November 2000.

Yugoslavia. Since U.S. relations were reestablished in November 2000, Embassy officials have met with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities in Serbia and Montenegro and with government officials to promote respect of religious freedom and protection of human rights. The U.S. Government also supports

the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), including their efforts to protect Orthodox churches, shrines, and other religious sites to prevent any renewed outbreak of attacks on such sites. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Serbia under the Milosevic regime as a “country of particular concern.” This designation was lifted in January 2001 after Vojislav Kostunica was elected president.

AFRICA

ANGOLA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 774,200 square miles, and its population is approximately 12 million. Christianity is the religion of the vast majority of the country's population, with Roman Catholicism as the country's largest single denomination. The Roman Catholic Church claims 5 million adherents, but such figures could not be verified. The major Protestant denominations also are present, along with a number of indigenous African and Brazilian Christian denominations. The largest Protestant denominations include the Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists (United Church of Christ), and Assemblies of God. The largest syncretic religious group is the Kimbanguist Church, whose followers believe that a mid-20th century Congolese pastor named Joseph Kimbangu was a prophet. A small portion of the country's rural population practices animism or traditional indigenous religions. There is a small Islamic community based around migrants from West Africa. There are a few atheists in the country.

In colonial times, the country's coastal populations primarily were Catholic while the Protestant mission groups were active in the interior. With the massive social displacement caused by 26 years of civil war, this rough division is no longer valid.

Foreign missionaries were very active prior to independence in 1975, although the Portuguese colonial authorities expelled many Protestant missionaries and closed mission stations based on the belief that the missionaries were inciting pro-independence sentiments. Missionaries have been able to return to the country since the early 1990's, although security conditions due to the civil war have made it impossible for them to return to most parts of the interior.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government does not require religious groups to register. Colonial era statutes banned all non-Christian religious groups from Angola; while those statutes still exist, they are no longer in effect. In March 2001, Minister Tjipilica announced that colonial-era law granting civil registration authority to the churches is to be put back into effect.

A Luanda Catholic FM radio station, Radio Ecclesia, broadcasts weekly several hours of church services and overtly religious programming. State-owned television also broadcasts live Sunday morning Catholic Church services.

The post-independence Government was a one-party state until 1991 and had nationalized all church schools and clinics; however, since that time, all schools and

clinics have been returned to the churches, and the Government permits churches and missions to start schools.

During a Catholic bishops' conference in March 2001, the Government asked the Catholic Church for assistance in implementing the Peace and Reconciliation Fund and for support in carrying out social programs in the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Members of the clergy in government-held areas regularly use their pulpits to criticize government policies. There were unconfirmed reports that in May 2001, the state radio censored remarks made by the Archbishop of Lubango, Dom Zacarias Kamuenho, publicly criticizing both the Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) on behalf of the Catholic Church after a UNITA raid on the town of Caxito on May 5; however, the Government permitted Dom Zacharia's statement to be broadcast in full on Catholic Radio Ecclesia.

While in general the rebel group UNITA permitted freedom of religion, interviews with persons who left UNITA-controlled areas revealed that the clergy did not enjoy the right to criticize UNITA policies.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In January 1999, unknown gunmen killed Father Albino Saluaco, a Catholic parish priest, and two catechists in a town in the province of Huambo that was under UNITA military occupation. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the country's religious denominations, and there is a functioning ecumenical movement, particularly in support of peace.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Embassy officials and official visitors from the U.S. routinely meet with the country's religious leaders in the context of peacekeeping, democratization, development, and humanitarian relief efforts. Church groups are key members of the country's civil society movement and are consulted regularly by embassy officials. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, the Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and others, maintain an ongoing dialog with the leaderships of all of the country's religious denominations.

BENIN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 42,711 square miles, and its population in 2000 was 6,396,591. Reliable statistics on religious affiliation are not available; however, according to most estimates, approximately 25 percent of the population nominally are Christian, and approximately 15 percent nominally are Muslim. At least 60 percent of the population adheres to one form or another of traditional indigenous religions. Many persons who nominally identify themselves as Christian or Muslim also practice traditional indigenous religions. Among the most commonly

practiced traditional indigenous religion is the animist “vodoun” system of belief, which originated in this area of Africa. Almost all citizens appear to be believers of a supernatural order. There practically are no atheists.

Over half of all Christians are Roman Catholics. Other groups include Baptists, Methodists, Assembly of God, Pentecostals, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Celestial Christians, Rosicrucians, the Unification Church, Eckankar, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Baha’i Faith. Nearly all Muslims adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam. The few Shi’a Muslims primarily are Middle Eastern expatriates. No data presently are available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals.

There are Christians, Muslims, and adherents of traditional indigenous religions throughout the country. However, most adherents of the traditional Yoruba religion are in the south, while other traditional indigenous faiths are followed in the north. Muslims are represented most heavily in the north and in the southeast. Christians are prevalent in the south, particularly in Cotonou, the economic capital. It is not unusual for members of the same family to practice Christianity, Islam, traditional indigenous religions, or several combinations of all of these.

Foreign missionary groups presently known to be operating in the country include the Watchtower Society, Adventist Frontier Missions, Society in Mission (SIM), and the Evangelical Baptist Mission.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Persons who wish to form a religious group must register with the Ministry of the Interior. Registration requirements are identical for all religious groups, and there were no reports that any group had been refused permission to register or had been subjected to unusual delays or obstacles in the registration process. Religious groups are free from taxation. The Government accords respect to prominent religious leaders and different faiths.

Missionary groups operate freely throughout the country.

In accordance with Article 2 of the Constitution, which provides for a secular state, public schools are not authorized to provide religious instruction.

Three Muslim, six Christian, and one traditional indigenous religious holidays are observed officially: Ramadan, Tabaski, Maouloud; Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, Assumption Day, All Saints Day, Christmas, and traditional Religions Day (January 10).

State-run television features coverage of the celebration of religious holidays and special events in the lives of prominent religious leaders, including ordination anniversaries and funerals.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Due possibly to the diversity of religious affiliations within families and communities, religious tolerance is widespread at all levels of society and in all geographic regions. Relations generally are amicable between the many religious groups. Interfaith dialog occurs regularly, and citizens respect different religious traditions and practices, including syncretistic beliefs.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

BOTSWANA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 227,344 square miles and its population is approximately 1,611,000. About half of the country's citizens identify themselves as Christians. Anglicans, Methodists, and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa—formerly the London Missionary Society—claim the majority of Christian adherents. There also are congregations of Lutherans, Roman Catholics, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, the Dutch Reformed Church, and other Christian denominations. Most other citizens adhere to traditional indigenous religions or to a mixture of religions. In recent years, a number of churches of West African origin have begun holding services and draw good-sized crowds with a charismatic blend of Christianity and traditional indigenous religions. There is a small Muslim community—approximately 2 to 3 percent of the population—primarily of South Asian origin, and a very small Baha'i community. It is unknown if there are any atheists in the country.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Quakers, Baptists, Lutherans, Catholics, and a number of independent evangelical and charismatic Christian groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion. The Constitution also provides for the protection of the rights and freedoms of other persons, including the right to observe and practice any religion without the unsolicited intervention of members of any other religion.

All religious organizations must register with the Government. To register, a group submits its constitution to the Ministry of Home Affairs. After a generally simple bureaucratic process, the organization is registered. There are no legal benefits for registered organizations. Unregistered groups potentially are liable to penalties including fines up to \$178 (1,000 Pula), up to 7 years in jail, or both. Except for the case of the Unification Church, there is no indication that any religious organization has ever been denied registration.

The Constitution provides that every religious community may establish places for religious instruction at the community's expense. The Constitution prohibits forced religious instruction, forced participation in religious ceremonies, or taking oaths that run counter to an individual's religious beliefs.

There are no laws against proselytizing.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Constitution provides for the suspension of religious freedom in the interests of national defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health; however, any suspension of religious freedom by the Government must be deemed "reasonably justifiable in a democratic society."

In 1984 the Unification Church was denied registration by the Ministry of Home Affairs on the public order grounds stipulated in the Constitution. The Government also perceived the Unification Church to be anti-Semitic and denied it registration because of another constitutional provision that protects the rights and freedoms of individuals to practice their religion without intervention. In the intervening 17 years, the Unification Church has petitioned the offices of the President and Vice President without success, but has made no move to challenge the Ministry's decision in the courts. It is unclear whether the Unification Church maintained a presence in the country during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the country's religious communities generally are amicable.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

BURKINA FASO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 105,689 square miles, and its total population is 11,600,000. There is no single dominant religion. Exact reliable statistics on religious affiliation are not available. Approximately 50 percent of the population practice Islam, approximately 20 percent practice Roman Catholicism, approximately 5 percent are members of various Protestant denominations, and 25 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively. However, syncretistic beliefs and practices are widespread among both Christians and Muslims, and a majority of citizens continue to practice traditional indigenous religions to varying degrees. Almost all citizens are believers in a supernatural order and atheism is virtually non-existent. The majority of the country's Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, while small minorities adhere to the Shi'a or Tidjania branches.

Muslims are concentrated largely around the northern, eastern, and western borders, while Christians are concentrated in the center of the country. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced widely throughout the country, especially in rural communities. Ouagadougou, the capital, is mostly Christian, and Bobo-Dioulasso, the country's second largest city, is largely Muslim. The country has a small Lebanese immigrant community, whose members are both Muslim and Christian.

Members of the dominant ethnic group, the Mossi, belong to all three major religions. Fulani and Jula groups overwhelmingly are Muslim. There is little correlation between religious differences and political differences. Religious affiliation appears unrelated to membership in the ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress. Government officials belong to all of the major religions.

Foreign missionary groups are active in the country, and include the Assemblies of God, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Christian Missionary Alliance, Baptists, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Mennonite Central Committee, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Pentecostal Church of Canada, the World Evangelical Crusade, the Society for International Missions, and numerous Roman Catholic organizations.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Islam, Christianity, and traditional indigenous religions are practiced freely without government interference. There is no official state religion, and the Government neither subsidizes nor favors any particular religion.

The practice of a particular faith is not known to entail any advantage or disadvantage in the political arena, the civil service, the military, or the private sector.

The Government requires that religious groups register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration. Registration establishes a group's legal presence in the country but entails no specific controls or benefits. Religious groups only are taxed if they carry on lucrative activities, such as farming. Registration only confers legal status. There are no penalties for failure to register. All groups are given equal access to licenses, and the Government does not approve registrations in an arbitrary manner.

Foreign missionary groups, including Protestants, operate freely and face no special restrictions. The Government neither forbids missionaries from entering the country nor restricts their activities.

Religious instruction is not offered in public schools; it is limited to private schools and to the home. Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant groups operate primary and secondary schools. The State monitors both the nonreligious curriculum and the qualifications of teachers employed at these schools. Although school officials must submit the names of their directors to the Government, the State never has been involved in appointing or approving these officials. The Government does not fund any religious school. Unlike other private schools, religious schools pay no taxes if they do not conduct any lucrative activities.

Religious groups are free to say what they want in their publications and broadcasts unless the judicial system determines that they are harming public order or committing slander; this never has occurred. The Ministry of Security grants publishing licenses, and the Superior Council of Information (CSI) grants broadcasting licenses. The Government never has denied a publishing or broadcasting license to any religious group that has requested one. The procedures for applying for publishing and broadcasting licenses are the same for both religious groups and commercial entities. Applications first are sent for review to the Ministry of Information and then forwarded to the Ministry of Security. If the Government does not respond to the application for a publishing license within the required timeframe, the applicant can begin publishing automatically. For radio licenses, before beginning broadcasts the applicant must wait until the Authority for the Regulation of Telecommunications (ARTEL) assigns a frequency and determines that the group's broadcasting equipment is of a professional quality. The Ministry of Security has the right to request samples of proposed publications and broadcasts to verify that they are in accordance with the stated nature of the religious group; however, there were no reports of religious broadcasters experiencing difficulties with this regulation. In the case of radio stations, the CSI must be informed of the name of the broadcasting director as well as a general programming content. Once the broadcast license is granted, the Government regulates the operation of religious radio stations in accordance with the same rules that apply to commercial and state-run stations. Stations must show that their workers are employed full-time, that ARTEL has been paid for the use of assigned frequencies, and that employee social security taxes and intellectual property fees have been paid. There are no special tax preferences granted to religious organizations operating print or broadcast media.

There are 14 radio stations operated by religious groups, of which 5 are run by the Catholic Church and 4 are run by Protestant denominations. Five of the stations were created before the CSI was established in 1995. All 14 have signed agreements with the CSI, which means that they have complied successfully with the regulations governing the operation of all radio stations in the country, including those that are commercial and state-run. There is one religious television station operated by a Protestant denomination in Ouagadougou. It broadcasts for 5 hours in the evening in both French and the local language, More. Muslim groups, the Catholic Church, and Protestant denominations publish periodicals.

The Government has established the following religious holidays as national holidays: Eid Al-Adha, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Mouloud, Assumption Day, All Saints' Day, Ramadan, and Christmas Day. There is no evidence that these holidays have a negative effect on any religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable. Religious tolerance is widespread, and members of the same family often practice different religions.

There have been no significant ecumenical movements. Muslim, Christian, and traditional religious leaders played a prominent role in the National Day of Forgiveness in 2000, a government-organized event to atone for past state-sponsored political and economic crimes.

There were no reports of religious conflict or ritual murders during the period covered by this report; however, there were allegations of witchcraft. The Ministry of Social Action and the Family maintains a shelter in Ouagadougou for women forced to flee their villages because they were suspected of being sorceresses.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses issues of religious freedom with the Government in context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy also maintains contacts with leaders of all major organized religious denominations and groups in the country.

BURUNDI

The Transitional Constitutional Act provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by the report. While in general government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion, the Government arrested the leader of an indigenous religious group for security reasons.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,745 square miles and its population is approximately 6.2 million. Although reliable statistics on the number of followers of various religions are not available, a Roman Catholic official estimated that 60 percent of the population are Catholic, with the largest concentration of adherents located in the center and south of the country. A Muslim leader estimated that up to 10 percent of the population are Muslim, mostly in urban areas. The remainder of the population belongs to other Christian churches, practices traditional indigenous religions, or has no religious affiliation. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of small indigenous groups not affiliated with any major religion, some of which have won adherents by promising miracle cures for HIV/AIDS and other ailments. Many citizens regularly attend religious services.

Foreign missionary groups of many faiths are active in the country, including Bahá'is, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Quakers (Friends Church), and Seventh-Day Adventists.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Transitional Constitutional Act provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion; however, the Catholic Church, which represents approximately 60 percent of the population, is predominant.

The Government requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which keeps track of their leadership and activities. The Government requires that religious groups maintain a headquarters in the country. While there is no law that accords tax exemptions to religious groups, the Government often waives taxes on imported religious articles used by churches and also often waives taxes on the importation by churches of goods destined for social development purposes. These exemptions are negotiated with the Finance Ministry on a case-by-case basis, and there is no indication of religious bias in the awarding of such exemptions.

The heads of major religious organizations are accorded diplomatic status. Foreign missionary groups openly promote their religious beliefs. The Government has welcomed their development assistance.

The Government recognizes religious holidays that primarily are Catholic, including Assumption, Ascension, and All Saint's Day, as well as Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In general government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On October 3, 2000, soldiers shot and killed Antonio Bargiggia, a Catholic brother from Italy, who ran a hospital in Mutoyi. On October 19, a soldier, Napoleon Manirakiza, was convicted of killing Bargiggia and was executed for murder without having had legal representation during his trial or a chance to appeal his conviction.

In April 2001, the Government arrested the leader of an indigenous religious group and closed down his church after the leader's claims to divinity led to repeated clashes with a rival leader's adherents. The Government claimed to be motivated by concern for public order rather than religious bias. The leader's trial was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. There were no other cases of clergy being arrested or churches closed for religious reasons.

On June 9, 2001, FDD rebels killed Anglican archdeacon Jodl Beheda and two other persons in an ambush on their van near Makamba. On June 11, 2001, rebels killed one nun in an ambush on a vehicle in the area of Mutambara belonging to the Roman Catholic bishop of Bururi.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In their practice of religion, citizens generally tolerate other religions. Disputes between religious groups are rare, apart from minor disagreements over competition for followers.

In October 2000, there were reports that unidentified attackers killed an Italian nun in Gitega. Observers believe that the attack was criminal, not political in nature. No person had been arrested by the end of the period covered by this report.

Catholic Bishops drew up a joint message calling for dialog and compromise to end conflict, and the message was read in Catholic churches throughout the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials also maintain regular contact with leaders and members of the various religious communities.

CAMEROON

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Religious sites and personnel, at times, were subjected to abuses by government security forces.

Relations among different religious groups generally are amicable; however, some religious groups face societal pressure and discrimination within their regions, although this may reflect ethnic as much as religious differences.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 183,568 square miles and its population is 15,421,937. Muslim centers and Christian churches of various denominations operate freely throughout the country. Approximately 40 percent of the population at

least nominally are Christian, about 20 percent at least nominally are Muslim, and about 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Approximately half of Christians are Catholics and approximately half are affiliated with Protestant denominations. Christians are concentrated chiefly in the southern and western provinces. The two Anglophone provinces of the western region largely are Protestant; and the Francophone provinces of the southern and western regions largely are Catholic. Muslims are concentrated mainly in the northern provinces, where the locally dominant Fulani (or Peuhl) ethnic group overwhelmingly is Muslim, and other ethnic groups, known collectively as the Kirdi, generally are partly Islamicized. The Bamoun ethnic group of the western provinces also largely is Muslim. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced in rural areas throughout the country but rarely are practiced publicly in cities, in part because many such religions are intrinsically local in character.

Religious missionaries are present throughout the country, including Catholic, Muslim, Baha'i, Baptist, Presbyterian, Evangelic, and the New Church of God.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions. There is no state religion.

In general the Law on Religious Congregations governs relations between the State and religious groups. Religious groups must be approved and registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration in order to function legally; there were no reports that the Government refused to register any group. It is illegal for a religious group to operate without official recognition, but the law prescribes no specific penalties for doing so. Although official recognition confers no general tax benefits, it does allow religious groups to receive real estate as gifts and legacies for the conduct of their activities. In order to register, a religious denomination must fulfill the legal requirement to qualify as a religious congregation. This definition includes "any group of natural persons or corporate bodies whose vocation is divine worship" or "any group of persons living in community in accordance with a religious doctrine." The denomination then submits a file to the Minister of Territorial Administration. The file must include a request for authorization, a copy of the charter of the group that describes planned activities, and the names and respective functions of the officials of the group. The Minister studies the file and sends it to the presidency with a recommendation for a positive or negative decision. The President generally follows the recommendation of the Minister, and authorization is granted by a presidential decree. The approval process usually takes several years, due primarily to administrative delays. The only religious groups known to be registered are Christian and Muslim groups and the Baha'i Faith, but other groups may be registered. The Ministry has not disclosed the number of registered denominations, but the number of registered religious groups is estimated to be in the dozens. The Government does not register traditional religious groups on the grounds that the practice of traditional religions is not public but rather private to members of a particular ethnic or kinship group, or to the residents of a particular locality.

Disputes within registered religious groups about control of places of worship, schools, real estate, or financial assets are resolved in the first instance by the executive branch rather than by the judiciary.

Religious missionary groups are present in the country and operate without impediment.

Several religious denominations operate diverse private schools. Although post-secondary education continues to be dominated by state institutions, private schools affiliated with religious denominations, including Catholic, Protestant, and Koranic schools, have been among the country's best schools at the primary and secondary levels for many years. The Ministry of Education is charged by law with ensuring that private schools run by religious groups meet the same standards as state-operated schools in terms of curriculum, building quality, and teacher training. For schools affiliated with religious groups, this oversight function is performed by the Sub-Department of Confessional Education of the Ministry's Department of Private Education.

A private radio station, founded by a Catholic priest but not affiliated with the Catholic Church, continues to broadcast in Yaounde while its official authorization remains pending. The Catholic Church also operates one of the country's few modern private printing presses, and a weekly newspaper, "L'Effort Camerounais," which until the 1990's was one of the only private newspapers in the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, government officials criticized and questioned any criticisms of the Government by religious institutions and leaders (see Section III); however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report.

On April 24, 2000, the Ministry of National Education announced the suspension of two teachers of the Bertoua technical high school. The two teachers were accused of having “enticed” some of their students into their religious group.

The practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense under the national penal code; however, persons generally are prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In the past, the sites and personnel of religious institutions were not exempt from the widespread human rights abuses committed by government security forces. On April 20, 2000, government security forces reportedly stormed Notre Dame de Sept Douleurs parish in Douala during the ceremony of Mass. Security forces reportedly arrested some parishioners and beat others. There have been no reports of government action taken in response to this incident, and there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among different religious groups generally are amicable; however, some religious groups face societal pressures within their regions. In the northern provinces, especially in rural areas, societal discrimination by Muslims against persons who practice traditional indigenous religions is strong and widespread, and some Christians in rural areas of the north complain of discrimination by Muslims. However, no specific incidents or violence stemming from religious discrimination were reported, and the reported discrimination may reflect ethnic as much as religious differences. The northern region suffers from ethnic tensions between the Fulani, a Muslim group that conquered most of the region 200 years ago, and the Kirdi, the descendants of groups that practiced traditional indigenous religions and whom the Fulani conquered or displaced, justifying their conquest on religious grounds. Although some Kirdi subsequently have adopted Islam, the Kirdi remain socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged relative to the Fulani in the three northern provinces. The slavery still practiced in parts of the north is reported to be largely enslavement of Kirdi by Fulani.

On June 16, 2001, Cardinal Tumi, The Catholic Archbishop of Douala, sent a letter to the Government strongly criticizing summary executions, torture, and other human rights abuses by the Douala Operational Command. The Government did not respond, either publicly or privately, by the end of the period covered by this report (see Section II).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy maintained regular contact with religious groups in the country and monitored religious freedom.

CAPE VERDE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country, which consists of nine inhabited islands, has a total land area of 1,557 square miles and is situated in the Atlantic Ocean some 280 miles from the most westerly point of the African mainland. The population is estimated at 480,000. The overwhelming majority (over 90 percent) of the population are at least nominally Roman Catholic. The largest Protestant denomination is the Church of the Nazarene. Other Christian churches include the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Assembly of God, and various other Pentecostal and evangelical groups. There are also small Muslim and Baha'i communities. There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country.

There is no association between religious differences and ethnic or political affiliations; however, it generally is understood that the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the country is sympathetic to the Movement for Democracy (MPD) party, which formerly ruled the country. While many Catholics once were hostile toward the Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV), which became the governing party in 2001, they have become supporters of the PAICV due to conflict within the MPD party and dissatisfaction over the MPD's performance.

There are some foreign missionary groups operating in the country, including evangelical groups from Brazil.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution also provides for the separation of church and state and prohibits the State from imposing any religious beliefs and practices. There is no state religion.

To be recognized as legal entities by the Government, religious groups (as well as other organized groups of citizens) must register with the Ministry of Justice; however, failure to do so does not result in any restriction on religious belief or practice.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

It generally is recognized that the Catholic majority enjoys a privileged status in national life. For example, the Government provides the Catholic Church with free television broadcast time for religious services and observes its holy days as official holidays.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities.

More than 20 cases involving the desecration of Catholic churches have been reported to the police over the years. While some cases date from 1975, after 1990 the rate of incidence increased; however, in contrast to previous years, there were no incidents during the period covered by this report. The persons responsible for the desecrations never were identified, and the topic has remained a controversial electoral issue since the MPD accused supporters of the main opposition party PAICV of involvement in the crimes; however, the courts have dismissed every formal accusation that has been brought against PAICV members, usually for lack of evidence. In August 1999, the Attorney General rejected a local prosecutor's dismissal of the case against the four individuals of the "S. Domingos Group," who were accused of desecrating a Catholic church in 1996, and no further action was taken during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion but establishes fixed legal conditions and prohibits what the Government considers religious fundamentalism or intolerance. The constitutional provision prohibiting religious fundamentalism is understood widely to be aimed at Muslims. In practice the Government permits adherents of all religions to worship without interference.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Generally there are amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, there have been occasional reports that villagers believed to be witches were harassed, beaten, or sometimes killed by neighbors.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has an area of approximately 242,000 square miles and a population of approximately 3.5 million, of which an estimated 690,000 persons live in the capital, Bangui. The population is believed to be about 50 percent Christian, 15 percent Muslim, and 35 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions or nonreligious. Most Christians also practice some aspects of traditional indigenous religions. The Government does not keep data on the number of nontraditional religious groups in the country, and there is no data available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals.

In general immigrants and foreign nationals in the country who practice a particular religion characterize themselves as Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim.

There are many missionary groups operating in the country, such as the Lutherans, Grace Brethren, and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as missionaries from Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other African countries.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion but establishes fixed legal conditions and prohibits what the Government considers religious fundamentalism or intolerance. The constitutional provision prohibiting religious fundamentalism is understood widely to be aimed at Muslims. In practice the Government permits adherents of all religions to worship without interference. There is no indication that the Government favors any particular religion, and there is no state religion.

Religious groups (except for traditional indigenous religious groups) are required by law to register with the Ministry of Interior. This registration is free and confers official recognition and certain limited benefits, such as customs duty exemption for the importation of vehicles or equipment, but does not confer a general tax exemption. The administrative police of the Ministry of Interior keep track of groups that have failed to register; however, the police have not attempted to impose any penalty on such groups.

Religious organizations and missionary groups are free to proselytize, worship, and construct places of worship.

Although the Government does not prohibit explicitly religious instruction in public schools, religious instruction is not a part of the overall public school curriculum. There are approximately 12 Catholic schools in Bangui.

Religious holidays celebrated as national holidays include Christmas, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, the Monday after Pentecost, and All Saints Day.

The Government has taken positive steps to promote interfaith dialog, including organizing interfaith Masses to promote peace (see Section III).

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Any religious or nonreligious group that the Government considers subversive is subject to sanctions. The Ministry of Interior may decline to register, suspend the operations of, or ban any organization that it deems offensive to public morals or likely to disturb the peace. The Ministry of Interior also may intervene to resolve

internal conflicts about property, finances, or leadership within religious groups. The Government has banned the Unification Church since the mid-1980's as a subversive organization likely to disturb the peace, specifically in connection with alleged paramilitary training of young church members. However, the Government imposed no new sanctions on any religious group during the period covered by this report.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of Mbororo (also known as Peulh or Fulani) Muslim herders being singled out for harassment by the authorities, including extortion by police, due to popular resentment of their presumed affluence. Muslims play a preponderant role in the economy.

The practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense under the Penal Code; however, persons generally are prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown. Although many traditional indigenous religions include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it. The practice of witchcraft is understood widely to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic, but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were reports of Muslim Chadian commercial traders being attacked in a commercial section near the center of Bangui. Although these attacks are commercially motivated, they seem to be aggravated and tolerated because the Chadians are Muslims. On one occasion, a Chadian was attacked in the presence of the Interior Minister. It is unclear if the attack was perpetrated by police or private citizens.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although in general there is religious tolerance among members of different religious groups, there have been occasional reports that some villagers who were believed to be witches were harassed, beaten, or sometimes killed by neighbors. Courts have tried, convicted, and sentenced some persons for crimes of violence against suspected witches. There were no reported mob killings of persons suspected of practicing witchcraft during the period covered by this report.

Unlike in previous years, during the period covered by this report, there were no reports that organized armed highway bandits attacked religious groups, particularly Catholic priests and nuns, northeast of Bangui.

When serious social or political conflicts have arisen, simultaneous prayer ceremonies have been held in churches, temples, and mosques to ask for divine assistance. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace often conducts developmental and educational programs and seminars throughout the country. The members work closely with other church groups and social organizations on social issues. On February 24, 2001, thousands of worshipers of different religious faiths took part in a Mass at the national stadium that was dedicated to peace in the country. President Ange Felix Patasse, who organized the Mass in the wake of widespread strikes by civil servants demanding payment of salary arrears, urged the congregation of Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims not to allow the strike to affect peace adversely.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy maintains contact with religious groups, especially American missionaries in the country, and monitors human rights developments.

CHAD

The Constitution provides for religious freedom; at times the Government limited this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government has arrested and sanctioned some Islamic imams. The Government has banned the Islamic religious group Faydel Djaria and arrested and detained some of its members.

Generally there are amicable relations between the various religious communities. There were no indications of increasing tension between Christians and Muslims due to the proselytizing by evangelical Christians during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 495,755 square miles and its population is 7,612,950. Of the total population, 54 percent are Muslim, approximately one-third are Christian, and the remainder practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion at all. Most northerners practice Islam and most southerners practice Christianity or a traditional indigenous religion; however, population patterns are becoming more complex, especially in urban areas. Many citizens, despite stated religious affiliation, do not practice their religion regularly.

The vast majority of Muslims practice a moderate form of Islam known locally as Tidjani, which originated in 1727 under Sheik Ahmat Tidjani in what is now Morocco and Algeria. Tidjani Islam, as practiced in the country, incorporates some local African religious elements. A small minority of the country's Muslims (5 to 10 percent) are considered fundamentalist.

Roman Catholics make up the largest Christian denomination in the country; most Protestants are affiliated with various evangelical Christian groups.

Adherents of two other religions, the Baha'i Faith and Jehovah's Witnesses, also are present in the country. Both faiths were introduced after independence in 1960 and therefore are considered to be "new" religions. Because of their relatively recent origin and their affiliation with foreign practitioners, both are perceived as foreign.

There are foreign missionaries representing both Christian and Islamic groups. Itinerant Muslim imams also visit, primarily from Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government limited this right in practice. The Constitution also provides that the country shall be a secular state; however, despite the secular nature of the State, a large proportion of senior government officials are Muslims, and some policies favor Islam in practice. For example, the Government sponsors annual Hajj trips to Mecca for certain government officials.

The Government requires religious groups, including both foreign missionary groups and domestic religious groups, to register with the Ministry of the Interior's Department for Religious Affairs. Registration confers official recognition but does not confer any tax preferences or other benefits. There are no specific legal penalties for failure to register, and there were no reports that any group had failed to apply for registration or that the registration process is unduly burdensome. In the past, the Government reportedly has denied official recognition to some groups of Arab Muslims in Ati, near the eastern border with Sudan, on the grounds that they have incorporated elements of traditional African religion, such as dancing and singing, into their worship; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report.

On May 31, 2000, the Supreme Court rejected a request from one branch of a Christian evangelical church to deny government recognition to its independent sister branch. In 1998 the Eglise Evangelique des Freres (EEF) split into moderate and fundamentalist groups. The moderate branch of the EEF retained the legal registration for the Church, but on April 7, 1999, the Ministry of Interior awarded recognition to the fundamentalist branch under a new name Eglise des Freres Independentes au Tchad (EFIT). Since 1999 the EEF branch has sought to bar the EFIT church legally from practice, and ultimately the case went before the Supreme Court, which upheld the rights of the EFIT to continue its religious work and its right to function.

In 2000 representatives of civil society and religious leaders met under the Ministry of Social Affairs' auspices to develop a new Family Code; however, the working group was not able to resolve certain differences between religious groups and no

further action was taken on the draft Family Code during the period covered by this report.

Foreign missionaries do not face restrictions but must register and receive authorization from the Ministry of Interior. There were no reports that authorization was withheld from any group. Catholic and Protestant missionaries proselytize in the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In January 1998, the Minister of Interior banned the Islamic religious group Faydal Djarja. The group arrived in the country from Nigeria and Senegal, and incorporates singing and dancing into its religious ceremonies and activities. Male and female members of the group freely interact with one another during religious gatherings. The group is found from the Kanem region around Lake Chad into neighboring Chari Baguirmi. The Chadian Superior Council of Islamic Affairs considers that the Faydal Djarja group does not conform to Islamic tenets. Early in 2000, the group increasingly became active, resulting in a number of arrests in the Kanem. The new Director of Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Interior has requested that the Superior Council of Islamic Affairs provide the specific sections of the Koran that support the ban of the group.

According to a Protestant pastor in N'Djamena, while differing faiths or denominations are treated equally by the Government, Islamic congregations appear to have an easier time obtaining official permission for their activities. Non-Islamic religious leaders also claim that Islamic officials and organizations receive greater tax exemptions and unofficial financial support from the Government. State lands reportedly are accorded to Islamic leaders for the purpose of building mosques, while other religious denominations must purchase land at market rates to build churches. However, during the period covered by this report, at least one Christian congregation was able to reclaim a former building that was being used by a Muslim congregation, because the Government found that the Christian Church had a stronger legal claim to the building.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There is an undetermined number of followers of Faydal Djarja, the banned Islamic group, who are prisoners in Kanem. On May 25, 2000, the Sultan of Kanem arrested a number of adherents of the group Faydal Djarja. In addition the Chadian Superior Council of Islamic Affairs, which believes that the group does not conform to Islamic tenets, requested that the Ministry of Interior arrest the group's spiritual leader, Ahmat Abdallah.

Within the Islamic community, the Government has imprisoned and sanctioned fundamentalist Islamic imams believed to be promoting conflict among Muslims. A fundamentalist imam in N'Djamena, Sheikh Faki Suzuki was restricted from preaching Islam for 6 months, from October 1998 to March 1999, and the authorities also placed him under house arrest on the grounds that he was inciting religious violence. However, Suzuki was no longer under house arrest, he was not restricted from preaching Islam, and did not experience problems with the Islamic Committee during the period covered by this report.

In January 1999, the Government arbitrarily arrested and detained imam Sheikh Mahamat Marouf, the fundamentalist Islamic leader of the northeastern town of Abeche, and refused to allow his followers to meet and pray openly in their mosque. The Government claims that Marouf was responsible for inciting religious violence although Marouf's followers reject the Government's claim and cite religious differences with the Government. Sheik Marouf was released from prison in November 1999 after nearly 1 year in jail. Sheikh Marouf may pray but is not permitted to lead prayers. His followers are allowed to pray in their mosques, but are forbidden from debating religious beliefs in any way that might be considered proselytizing; however, the Tidjani followers are allowed to proselytize.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Former Islamic adherents who have converted are shunned by their families and sometimes beaten; however, there were no reported incidents of beatings during the period covered by this report.

Most interfaith dialog happens on an individual level and not through the intervention of the Government. The different religious communities generally coexist

without problems. Unlike in past years, government and church officials reported that there was no conflict between Christian denominations, including Protestant denominations, during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

COMOROS

The Constitution does not provide for freedom of religion specifically and does not prohibit discrimination based on religion or religious belief specifically, and authorities infringed on freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of what is at times limited respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. An overwhelming majority of the population is Sunni Muslim, and government authorities and the local population restricted the right of Christians to practice their faith. Police regularly threatened and sometimes detained practicing Christians. Usually the authorities held those detained for a few days and often attempted to convert them forcibly to Islam.

There is widespread societal discrimination against Christians.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 838 square miles and its population is approximately 578,400. An overwhelming majority—almost 99 percent—of the population are Sunni Muslim. Fewer than 300 persons—less than 1 percent of the population—are Christian; all of whom reportedly converted to Christianity within the last 6 years. There is a very small population (less than five families) of Indian descent, of which two or three families are Hindu. There are no atheists in the country.

A few foreign missionaries of Christian faith practice in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution, which was promulgated in May 2000 by the head of the military after the April 1999 coup, provides that the National Army of Development upholds individual and collective liberties; however, it does not provide for freedom of religion specifically, and authorities infringed on freedom of religion. The Government discouraged the practice of religions other than Islam. The Ulama council, which had advised the President, Prime Minister, President of the Federal Assembly, the Council of Isles, and the island governors on whether bills, ordinances, decrees, and laws are in conformity with the principles of Islam, no longer exists. The Constitution written by the separatist leadership of the island of Anjouan provides for freedom of religion; however, in the past, the separatist leadership has discouraged the practice of religions other than Islam. Civil authorities on Anjouan appear to have refrained from discouraging religions other than Islam during the period covered by this report, possibly because they were focused on political efforts to reunify the country. The Fombani Declaration that was signed by Azali and the Anjouan separatist leader in August 2000 included an agreement to make Islam the national religion; however, there were no reports of official discrimination or other abuse initiated by civil authorities during the period covered by this report.

The February 17, 2001, "Framework Accord for Reconciliation in the Comoros" created a commission that is tasked with developing a new Constitution by June 2001; however, the new Constitution had not been created by the end of the period covered by this report.

There is Islamic instruction in public schools for students at the middle school level that is taught in conjunction with Arabic instruction. Almost all children between 4 and 7 years of age go to Koranic schools outside of normal school hours in order to learn to read the Koran.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government discouraged the practice of religions other than Islam. Christians, in particular, faced restrictions on their ability to practice their faith. The Government continued to restrict the use of the country's three churches to nonciti-

zens. There are two Roman Catholic churches, one in Moroni on the island of Grande Comore and one in Mutsamudu on the island of Anjouan. There is one Protestant church in Moroni. Many Christians practice their faith in private residences. Foreign missionaries work in local hospitals and schools, but they are not allowed to proselytize.

Local authorities and religious leaders continued to harass Christians on Anjouan. In the past, some community authorities on Anjouan have banned Christians from attending any community events and banned Christian burials in a local cemetery, but there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report.

Bans on alcohol and immodest dress are enforced sporadically, usually during religious months, such as Ramadan. Alcohol can be imported and sold with a permit from the Government.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On October 13, 2000, during protests in Moroni, there were reports that police arrested persons inside a mosque while they were praying; all of those arrested in connection with the protests were released without charge after 24 hours.

Police regularly threatened and sometimes detained practicing Christians. The Government has arrested and convicted individuals with Christian affiliations on charges of "anti-Islamic activity." In the past, local government officials attempted to force Christians to attend services at mosques against their will; however, there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report (see Section III).

In the past, there have been accounts of police and quasi-police authorities, known as embargoes, arresting, beating, and detaining Christians on the island of Anjouan. One Anjouanais Christian estimated that approximately 50 Christians, both men and women, were detained and released several days later by the embargoes in an 18-month period between 1999 and 2000. There were no reports of Christians being detained on Anjouan at the end of the period covered by this report.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is widespread societal discrimination against Christians in all sectors of life. Christians face insults and threats of violence from members of their communities. Christians have been harassed by mobs in front of mosques and called in for questioning by religious authorities. In April 2001, in Domoni on Anjouan, one of the local Christian leaders was summoned before local Islamic leaders and threatened. The Christian leader's father was forced to pay a fine, and the leader's family had to leave Domoni for a month. Several times in the first half of 2001, religious leaders on Anjouan and Grande Comore have made threats against Christians during radio broadcasts. In December 2000, also in Domini, community members set fire to the house of a Christian man while he was sleeping inside; the man escaped.

Attempts have been made to isolate Christians from village life. In September and October 1999, on Anjouan, a religious leader started an unofficial campaign against Christians. Committees were formed in many villages to harass Christians, and lists of names of suspected Christians were circulated; however, there were no reports during the period covered by this report that the committees were active or that the lists were used to harass Christians.

In some instances, families have forced Christian family members out of their homes or threatened them with a loss of financial support. Some Christians have had their Bibles taken by family members. In the past, local government officials, religious authorities, and family members attempted to force Christians to attend services at mosques against their will (see Section II); however, there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report.

Islamic fundamentalism is growing in popularity as more students return to the country after studying Islamic subjects in foreign countries.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Although there is no constitution currently in effect, the Government generally respects freedom of religion in practice, provided that worshipers neither disturb public order nor contradict commonly held morals; however, government forces committed some abuses.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in government-controlled areas during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. However, in areas of the country under the military occupation of Rwanda and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) rebel group, respect for religious freedom continued to be poor. Credible reports indicate that RCD and Rwandan troops deliberately targeted churches in their general attacks on towns and villages. Between February and September 2000, RCD rebels and Rwandan authorities also exiled the Archbishop of Bukavu, whom they suspected of inciting resistance; however, these actions apparently resulted largely from political rather than religious motives. Although there have been reports that some Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) troops may have targeted Catholic clergy, subsequent reports indicate that UPDF troops were not involved in such incidents.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 1,456,500 square miles, and its population is approximately 52 million. Approximately 50 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, 20 percent are Protestant, and 10 percent are Muslim. The remainder largely practice traditional indigenous religions. There are no statistics available on the percentage of atheists. Minority religious groups include, among others, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

Foreign missionaries operate within the country.

There are no reliable data on active participation in religious services. Ethnic and political differences generally are not linked to religious differences.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

Although there is no constitution currently in effect, the Government generally respects freedom of religion in practice, provided that worshipers neither disturb public order nor contradict commonly held morals; however, government forces committed some abuses. There is no state religion.

The establishment and operation of religious institutions is provided for and regulated through a statutory order on the Regulation of Non-profit Associations and Public Utility Institutions. Requirements for the establishment of a religious organization are simple and generally are not subject to abuse. Exemption from taxation is among the benefits granted to religious organizations. A 1971 law regulating religious organizations grants civil servants the power to recognize, suspend recognition of, or dissolve religious groups. There have been no reports that the Government suspended or dissolved a religious group since 1990, when the Government suspended its recognition of the Jehovah's Witnesses; that suspension subsequently was reversed by a court. Although this law restricts the process of recognition, officially recognized religions are free to establish places of worship and to train clergy.

The Government requires practicing religious to be registered; however, in practice unregistered religious groups operate unhindered.

Although the Government requires foreign religious groups to obtain the approval of the President through the Minister of Justice, foreign religious groups generally operate without restriction once they receive approval from the Government. Many recognized churches have external ties, and foreign missionaries generally are allowed to proselytize. The Government generally did not interfere with foreign missionaries.

The Government promoted interfaith understanding by supporting and consulting with the country's five major churches (Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Orthodox, and Kimbanguist). President Joseph Kabila announced the liberalization of political party activities, a significant political reform, to the Consortium of Traditional Religious Leaders at the Kimbanguist Center. The Consortium of Traditional Religious Leaders serves as a forum for religious leaders to gather and discuss issues of con-

cern, and it advises and counsels the Government while presenting a common moral and religious front.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In January 1999, former President Laurent Kabila promulgated a decree that restricts the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), including religious organizations, by establishing requirements for them; however, existing religious organizations were exempt, and the decree subsequently was not enforced.

In July 1999, the Government issued an order prohibiting private radio stations from transmitting foreign radio broadcasts, which stopped broadcasts by a Catholic radio station in Kinshasa and a number of secular radio stations; however, the Minister of Communication retracted the order in September 1999. There have been no further government attempts to restrict religious broadcasts. Catholic radio stations did not broadcast foreign radio transmissions during the period covered by this report.

While the Government generally did not interfere with foreign missionaries, foreign missionaries have not been exempt from general restrictions by security forces, such as restrictions on freedom of movement imposed on all persons by security force members who erect and man roadblocks where they solicit bribes.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

While the Government is tolerant in matters of religion, some abuses occurred in government-controlled areas as a result of the war. These abuses, usually the ransacking of churches and the pilfering of church property, generally were the result of a lack of discipline among government troops.

On December 28, 2000, the military intelligence unit DEMIAP arrested Cyrien Mbuka, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Boma, in Bas-Congo Province, allegedly on charges of engaging in subversive actions. It is believed that his arrest was due to conflicts within the parish. On January 9, 2001, Cardinal Frederic Etsou issued a press release in which he protested Bishop Mbuka's arrest and that of other bishops during 2000. Mbuka was released on January 10, 2001.

In September 2000, Catherine Nzuzi, president of the major faction of the Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution (MPR) party, organized a Mass in memory of former President Mobutu. Although she previously was arrested in September 1999 after she organized a Mass for the deceased leader, the Government allowed the 2000 Mass to occur without incident.

Following the October 2000 death in Rome of Emmanuel Kataliko, the Archbishop of Bukavu, the Catholic Church announced that he had died of a heart attack; however, the Government of Laurent Kabila claimed that Tutsis had poisoned the Archbishop. These reports, which were picked up quickly by the newspapers and radio, particularly those in the rebel territories, incited the populace and contributed to demonstrations in the city of Bukavu in October. Rebel gunfire reportedly killed a child during the demonstrations; other sources reported that four people were killed.

War broke out in 1998 between the Government and rebel forces; by the end of the period covered by this report, rebel forces backed by Rwanda and Uganda continued to control more than half of the country. The Government exercises little authority in areas east of the disengagement line. In areas of the country under the military occupation of Rwanda, and their respective rebel clients, respect for religious freedom continued to be poor. RCD rebels and their Rwandan allies committed significant abuses in these areas. Credible reports indicate that RCD and Rwandan troops deliberately targeted Catholic churches as a means of both intimidating the local population and in retaliation for the Church's perceived role in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Abuses reportedly took the form of attacks on missions, killings of priests, the rape of nuns, and the burning of churches. Although there have been reports that some Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) troops may have targeted Catholic clergy, subsequent reports indicate that UPDF troops were not involved in such incidents.

Between February and September 2000, RCD rebels and Rwandan authorities kept Archbishop Kataliko of Bukavu in exile in the Kivu provinces because they suspected him of condoning resistance to the rebellion. These authorities only allowed the Archbishop's return to Bukavu on September 14 following significant U.S. and international pressure. The Archbishop died of a heart attack the following month while in Rome.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. However, in late June 2001, in Orientale Province, there were reports of witch hunts, which resulted in the killing of several hundred persons. The local population targeted the victims because they suspected and feared that they were casting spells on others. There is a common belief in the region that some persons have the power to cast spells on others; this fear sometimes rises to mass hysteria.

Leaders of major religions consult one another through the Consortium of Traditional Religious Leaders.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promoting human rights.

The U.S. Government criticized the forced internal exile of the Archbishop of Bukavu, in both private discussions and public statements. On numerous occasions, the U.S. Government also voiced its opposition to the presence of hostile foreign troops in the country. The U.S. Government also publicly criticized the war and launched a number of diplomatic initiatives, in concert with the U.N., to bring the conflict to an end.

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Fundamental Act provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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.

While the generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom, the close link between certain messianic groups and opposition political movements at times was a source of tension.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 132,047 square miles and its population is approximately 3 million. Approximately half of its citizens are Christian; of these about 90 percent are Roman Catholic. There is a small Muslim community estimated at 25,000 to 50,000 persons, most of whom are immigrants from North and West Africa who work in commerce in urban centers. The remainder of the population is made up of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, those who belong to various messianic groups, and those who practice no religion at all. A small minority of the Christian community practices Kimbanguism, a syncretist movement that originated in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo. While retaining many elements of Christianity, Kimbanguism also recognizes its founder (Simon Kimbangu) as a prophet and incorporates African traditional beliefs, such as ancestor worship.

Mystical or messianic practices (especially among the ethnic Lari population in the Pool region) have been associated with opposition political movements, including some elements of the armed insurrection in the south during 1998–1999.

It is unknown if foreign missionary groups operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution (Fundamental Act) provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no official state religion.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While the generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom, the close link between certain messianic groups and opposition political movements at times was a source of tension.

All organized religious groups are represented in a joint ecumenical council, which meets periodically.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

COTE D'IVOIRE

The new Constitution, which was approved by referendum in July 2000 and implemented on August 4, 2000, provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government at times limited this right in practice.

The status of respect for religious freedom deteriorated somewhat during the period covered by this report. In October and December 2000, violent clashes between security forces, Republican Rally (RDR) militants, and Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI) supporters, led to the deaths of hundreds of persons, most of whom were Muslims. During the period covered by this report, the security forces detained, questioned, and, on at least one occasion, beat Muslims. The Government monitors minority religions for signs of political activity it considers subversive or dangerous. Some Muslims believe that their religious and ethnic affiliation make them targets of discrimination by the Government with regard to both employment and the renewal of national identity cards.

Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable; however, there is some societal discrimination against Muslims and followers of traditional indigenous religions.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 122,780 square miles, and its population is 15,366,692. The published results of the most recent national census, conducted in 1998, indicated that Muslims make up about 38.6 percent of the country's population; Catholics make up 19.4 percent; practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, 11.9 percent; Protestants, 6.6 percent; Harrists, 1.3 percent; other Christians, 3.1 percent; practitioners of other religions, 1.7 percent; and persons without religious preference or affiliation, 16.7 percent. Among citizens, 27.4 percent are Muslim, 20.8 percent are Catholic, 15.4 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, 8.2 percent are Protestant, 1.6 percent are Harrist, 3.4 percent are of other Christian affiliations, 1.9 percent practice other religions, and 20.7 percent are without religious affiliation. Foreigners living in the country are 70.5 percent Muslim and 15.4 percent Catholic with small percentages practicing other religions.

Muslims are found in the greatest numbers in the northern half of the country, though they also are becoming increasingly numerous in the cities of the south due to immigration. In 1998 Muslims composed 45.5 percent of the total urban population and 33.5 percent of the total rural population. Catholics are found mostly in the southern, central, and eastern portions of the country. Practitioners of traditional indigenous religions are concentrated in rural areas of the country's north, west, center, and east. Protestants are concentrated in the central, eastern, and southwest regions. Members of the Harrist Church, an African Protestant denomination founded in the country in 1913 by a Liberian preacher named William Wade Harris, are concentrated in the south.

Political and religious affiliations tend to follow ethnic lines. As population growth and movement have accentuated ethnic distinctions between the groups of the Sahel and those of the forest zone, those distinctions have been expressed sometimes in

terms of religion (e.g., northern Muslims and southern Christians and traditionalists).

Religious groups in the country include the Adventist Church, the Assemblies of God, the Southern Baptist Church, Bossonism (the traditional religious practices of the Akan ethnic group), the Autonomous Church of Celestial Christianity of Oschoffa, Islam, Roman Catholicism, the Union of the Evangelical Church of Services and Works of Cote d'Ivoire, the Harrist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Protestant Methodist Church of Cote d'Ivoire, the Yoruba First Church, the Church of God International Missions, the Baptist Church Missions, the Church of the Prophet Papa Nouveau (a syncretistic religion founded in the country in 1937, which combines Christian doctrine, traditional indigenous rituals, and practical concern for social, political, and economic progress for Africans), the Pentecostal Church of Cote d'Ivoire, the Messianic Church, the Limoudim of Rabbi Jesus (a small Christian group, the origins of which are unknown), the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Interdenominational Church, the Eckankar religion (a syncretistic religion founded in 1965 in Nigeria that sees human passion as an obstacle to uniting a person's divine qualities), and Buddhism. Many religious groups in the country are associated with American religious groups.

Most of the country's many syncretistic religions are forms of Christianity that contain some traditional indigenous practices and rituals. Many of these have been founded by Ivoirian or other African prophets and are organized around and dependent upon the founder's personality. Some emphasize faith healing or the sale of sacred objects imbued with supernatural powers to bring health and good luck. Many nominal Christians and Muslims practice some aspects of traditional indigenous religions, especially in difficult times.

Generally, there has been a trend towards conversion by practitioners of traditional religions to Christianity and Islam. Missionary work, urbanization, immigration, and higher education levels have led to a decline in the percentage of practitioners of traditional religion from 37 percent in 1975 to 11.9 percent in 1998.

Immigrants from other parts of Africa generally are at least nominally Muslim or Christian. The majority of foreign missionaries are European or American representatives of established religions, but some Nigerians and Congolese also have set up churches.

In the past, Catholic priests tended to be better educated than leaders of other religions. Numerous Catholic schools were founded in the country in the early 1900's, during French colonial rule, and citizens who attended these schools generally received good educations and came to make up a disproportionately large part of the country's elites. Many senior government officials, including all three heads of state since independence, have been Catholics. The Baoule ethnic minority, which has dominated the State and the ruling Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) from independence in 1960 until 1999, largely is Catholic, although some Baoules continue to practice traditional indigenous religion and a few practice Islam.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution that was suspended following the December 24, 1999, coup d'etat provided for freedom of religion, and the previous Government generally respected this right. The new Constitution, implemented on August 4, 2000, also provides for freedom of religion; however, the new Government that came into power following the October 22, 2000, presidential election at times restricted this right in practice. There is no state religion, but for historical and ethnic reasons the Government informally favors Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic Church.

In past years, the Government has paid for the construction of Catholic cathedrals; however, the Government also sponsors or finances the construction of shrines for groups other than the Catholic Church. During the period covered by this report, the Government was directing the construction of the Plateau Mosque in central Abidjan and financing it with the help of governments or government-affiliated religious organizations of some largely Islamic Arab countries.

The Government establishes requirements for religious groups under a 1939 French law. All religious groups wishing to operate in the country must submit to the Ministry of the Interior a file including the group's bylaws, the names of the founding members, the date of founding (or date on which the founder received the revelation of his or her calling), the minutes of the general assembly, the names of members of the administrative board, and other information. The Interior Ministry investigates the backgrounds of the founding members to ascertain that the group has no politically subversive purpose. However, in practice the Government's regula-

tion of religious groups generally has not been unduly restrictive since 1990, when the Government legalized opposition political parties.

Although nontraditional religious groups, like all public secular associations, are required to register with the Government, no penalties are imposed on a group that fails to register. In practice registration can bring advantages of public recognition, invitation to official ceremonies and events, publicity, gifts, and school subsidies. No religious group has complained of arbitrary registration procedures or recognition; however, the Government does not register traditional indigenous religious groups.

The Government grants no tax or other benefits to religious groups; however, some religious groups have gained some favors after individual negotiations. Examples include reductions in the cost of resident alien registration, customs exemptions on certain religious items, and, in some cases, privileges similar to those of diplomats. No particular religion is favored consistently in this manner. Occasionally a state-owned company grants favors to religious leaders, such as a reduction in air-plane fare.

Foreign missionaries must meet the same requirements as any foreigner, including resident alien registration and identification card requirements. However, there were no reports that foreign missionaries were denied such registration arbitrarily.

Religious instruction is permitted in public schools and usually offered after normal class hours. Such instruction is offered by established Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant groups.

In 1999 Roman Catholic Church groups began to operate four community radio stations: Radio Espoir in Abidjan, Radio Paix Sanwi in Aboisso, Radio Notre Dame in Yamoussoukro, and Radio Dix-Huit Montagnes in Man. Although the Muslim associations received a broadcast license in 1999, no Muslim station had begun broadcasting by the end of the period covered by this report. Catholics, Muslims, and Protestants have had their own religious programs on national television and radio for over 20 years. On significant Christian and Islamic holy days, national television often broadcasts films on the lives of the founders of those religions.

The Government has taken some positive steps to promote interfaith understanding. Government officials, including the President and his religious advisers, make a point of appearing at major religious celebrations and events organized by a wide variety of faiths and groups. There is no government-sponsored forum for interfaith dialog, but the Government often invites leaders of various religious communities (but not of traditional indigenous religious groups) to attend official ceremonies and to sit on deliberative and advisory committees, including the Mediation Committee for National Reconciliation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government monitors minority religions, to the extent of registering them, but does not control them closely; however, the proliferation of new groups has caused some concern among Government officials and citizens. In his 1999 New Year's greetings, then-President Henri Konan Bedie advised the public to be wary of new groups that are not identified clearly and warned such groups against taking advantage of the country's tradition of tolerance to commit acts of fraud or manipulation. The Government closely watches some religious groups, including Islamic associations and minority groups for signs of political activity that it considers subversive.

In March 1999 and April 2001, local governments closed some Harrist churches, particularly in Bingerville and Grand Labou, to prevent an escalation of intrareligious violence (see Section III). Most of the churches were reopened by January 2001, following government mediation and the restoration of unity within the Harrist church. Almost all of the remaining churches were reopened by the end of the period covered by this report.

Police and gendarmes searched 17 mosques for arms prior to the October 22, 2000, presidential election. On August 27, 2000, approximately 25 gendarmes searched a mosque for arms that they suspected the Muslim community was hiding for the RDR. The mosque, which is located in Abidjan's Riviera 2 neighborhood, is headed by one of the leaders of the National Islamic Council (CNI), Imam Sekou Sylla. Gendarmes also mistakenly searched the house of one of the imam's neighbors. The gendarmes did not have warrants to conduct these searches.

The Government informally favors the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic Church leaders had a much stronger voice in government affairs than their Islamic counterparts, which led to feelings of disenfranchisement among the Muslim population. After assuming power following the coup, General Robert Guei indicated that one of the goals of the transition government was to end this favoritism and put all of the major religious faiths on an equal footing. However, in practice General Guei

did not take any steps to bring this about, nor has his successor, President Laurent Gbagbo.

Some Muslims believe that their religious or ethnic affiliation makes them targets of discrimination by the Government with regard to both employment and the renewal of national identity cards. Due to the tense political situation in the country and the ethnic divisions along which political party lines are drawn, northern Muslims sometimes are scrutinized more closely in the identity card application process. As these northern Muslims share names, style of dress, and customs with several of the country's predominantly Muslim neighboring countries, they sometimes are accused wrongly of attempting to obtain nationality cards illegally in order to vote or otherwise take advantage of citizenship.

Muslims often have had to struggle for state benefits that came more easily to practitioners of other religions. For example, Catholic and Protestant schools are regarded as official schools supervised by the Ministry of Education and subsidized by the Government. However, until 1994 Islamic schools were regarded as religious schools, were supervised by the Ministry of the Interior, and were unsubsidized even if they followed official school curriculums. Since 1994 Islamic schools that follow official curriculums have been subsidized by the Government. The Government recognized no Muslim religious holidays until 1974 and did not recognize all major Muslim religious holidays until 1994. Churches always have had organized Christian pilgrimages without formal government supervision, but until 1993 the Ministry of the Interior supervised Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca (the Hajj).

In May and June 2000, during his travels to various regions of the country, General Guei continually asked imams and other Muslim leaders to stay out of politics. The new Constitution and eligibility requirements for presidential candidates were being debated at the time, and the military government warned Muslim imams to refrain from political discourse in their sermons. The military Government suspected the imams of supporting coreligionist RDR president Alassane Dramane Ouattara, whose eligibility was at the center of the debates and whom General Guei did not want to have run for president. The Government claimed that the imams had been jeopardizing security with sermons that were too politically charged.

Other government officials also made public statements criticizing Muslim leaders. For example, on November 30, 2000, Minister of the Interior Emile Boga Doudou accused CNI President El Hadj Idriss Kone Koudouss of accepting \$50,000 (35 million FCFA) to plan and organize disturbances following the pending disqualification of Alassane Ouattara's candidacy. Boga Doudou also suggested that imam Koudouss was a member of the RDR. On December 5, 2000, Boga Doudou displayed firearms on national television, which he said the armed forces had seized in a mosque.

Traditional indigenous religions, which are not registered officially as religions, rarely are included in official or unofficial lists of the country's religions. There is no generally accepted system for classifying the country's diverse traditional religious practices, which vary not only by ethnic group, but also by region, village, and family, as well as by gender and age group. In addition, members of the country's largely Christianized or Islamicized urban elites, which effectively control the State, generally seem disinclined to accord to traditional indigenous religions the social status accorded to Christianity and Islam. No traditional indigenous religious leader (except for traditional rulers, who also may perform some traditional religious functions) is known to have been invited to present New Year's greetings to the President or to take part in a government advisory council. However, traditional Akan chiefs very often are invited to pour alcohol on the ground at the beginning of important ceremonies, even the most official ones, in order to bless the events.

The Government does not prohibit links to foreign coreligionists but informally discourages connections with politically radical fundamentalist movements, such as Islamic groups based in Iran and Libya.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Street demonstrations erupted following the October 22, 2000, presidential elections. Violent clashes among security forces, RDR militants, and militants from the FPI resulted in the deaths of more than 200 persons in Youpougon, a majority whom were identified as Muslims and RDR supporters. The Government, as well as several international and national human rights organizations, conducted investigations and published exhaustive reports on the killings. According to such reports, the gendarmes from Ababo Gendarme Camp most likely were responsible for the Youpougon killings. During the violence, several churches and mosques were damaged or destroyed, along with religious texts and sacred objects. Eighteen mosques were burned and 18 others were damaged throughout the country. Eight

churches were damaged or burned, and several documents and vehicles were destroyed.

Following the November 30, 2000, Supreme Court decision to disqualify Alassane Ouattara from the legislative elections, thousands of RDR supporters protested the decision. According to the Government, approximately 13 persons were killed in violent clashes with the military and gendarmes; the RDR estimated that 30 persons were killed. The Ivoirian Movement for Human Rights reported that 37 persons had been killed, most of whom were shot, and that several hundred persons had been injured. Gendarmes killed a 60-year-old Guinean man in front of his family as he was preparing for Muslim prayers on December 4, 2000; he was shot reportedly because he was wearing a Moslem robe, which the gendarmes believed marked him as a supporter of the RDR. In addition to the killings, security forces and rival political groups allegedly damaged or destroyed four mosques and four churches. Furthermore, following the RDR's December 4, 2000, demonstration, security forces arrested imams and approximately 200 Muslim worshippers in several mosques in the Abidjan's Abobo district. Security forces beat imam Bakary and others, stripped them of their clothes, and detained them for several days in Abidjan's police and gendarme camps. The Minister of State for Interior and Decentralization publicly accused the imams of hiding arms in their mosques. The Government released the imams and their worshippers by the end of 2000, following mediation by the Mediation Committee on National Reconciliation.

Citing the killings of hundreds of Muslims during the October and December 2000 demonstrations, CNI President Koudouss accused the authorities and the armed forces of having planned a genocide, adding that Muslims would not feel "reconciled" until the Government apologized to the Muslim community. The Government had not responded by the end of the period covered by this report.

On December 5, 2000, after youths set fire to a mosque in Abidjan's Abobo district, the anti-riot brigade used tear gas against and beat Muslims who had gathered to inspect the damage. When Imam Bassama Sylla attempted to intervene, the police stripped him and detained him. Police also entered at least two other mosques in Abobo and detained persons inside.

In addition to searching the homes of Islamic leaders, security forces also summoned Islamic leaders for questioning on several occasions based on suspicions that they were plotting civil unrest with the RDR.

On July 21, 2000, the military government briefly detained and questioned CNI President El Hadj Idriss Kone Koudouss for encouraging Muslims to vote against the new Constitution, which he argued reinforces the concept of "Ivoirity," a doctrine that discriminates against Ivoirians of mixed or foreign origins. Imam Koudouss also claimed that harassment of Muslims has increased since former President Bedie introduced "Ivoirity" in 1994. The CNSP noted that sermons such as Koudouss's could be considered inciting violence and rebellion. Koudouss was released after the warning.

On August 24, 2000, the gendarmes detained and questioned El Hadj Koudouss, four other prominent imams from the CNI, and one Islamic youth leader. The Government accused them of procuring arms, in cooperation with RDR presidential candidate Ouattara, in order to destabilize the country. The gendarmes released all six after questioning. According to the imams, this was the fifth time that leaders of the CNI had been called in for questioning since the coup. Muslims say that such acts by the Government are an attempt to make the Muslim community a "scapegoat" for the country's problems.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities generally are amicable; however, there is some societal discrimination against Muslims and followers of traditional indigenous religions.

The country's Islamic communities are subject to a great deal of societal discrimination. Some non-Muslims have objected to the construction of mosques, such as the new mosque in Abidjan's Plateau district, because the Islamic duty to give alms daily may attract beggars to neighborhoods containing mosques. Some non-Muslims also object to having to hear the muezzins' calls to prayer. Some persons consider all Muslims as foreigners or fundamentalists. Muslim citizens often are treated as

foreigners by their fellow citizens, including by government officials, because most Muslims are members of northern ethnic groups that also are found in other African countries from which there has been substantial immigration into the country. Muslims also frequently were discriminated against because of ethnic origin or presumed support of Ouattara's candidacy. Many Muslims are northerners and tended to support the presidential candidacy of Ouattara.

Followers of traditional indigenous religions also are subject to societal discrimination. Many leaders of nontraditional religions, such as Christianity or Islam, look down on practitioners of traditional indigenous religions as pagans, practitioners of black magic or human sacrifice. Some Christians or Muslims refuse to associate with practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. The practices of traditional indigenous religions often are shrouded by secrecy and include exclusive initiation rites, oaths of silence, and taboos against writing down orally transmitted history. However, there have been no reports of human sacrifice in the country since well before independence. Although the purported practice of black magic or witchcraft continues to be feared widely, it generally is discouraged by traditional indigenous religions, aspects of which commonly purport to offer protection from witchcraft. Traditional indigenous religions commonly involve belief in one supreme deity as well as lesser deities or spirits that are to be praised or appeased, some of whom may in some religions be believed to inhabit or otherwise be associated with particular places, natural objects, or man-made images. However, many practitioners of traditional indigenous religions are unaware of societal discrimination and have not complained.

Conflicts between and within religious groups have surfaced occasionally. In the past, members of the Limoudim of Rabbi Jesus, a small Christian group of unknown origin, have criticized and sometimes attacked other Christian groups for allegedly failing to follow the teachings of Jesus; however, there were no reports of such attacks during the period covered by this report.

The Celestial Christians are divided because of a leadership struggle, as are the Harrists who have resorted to violence on occasion to resolve their differences. In March 2000, during the internal struggle in the Harrist Church, clergy leader Barthelemy Akre Yasse struck Harrist National Committee president Tchotche Mel Felix from the church rolls for insubordination. This battle for church leadership at the national level led to violent confrontations between church members at the local level. In March and April 2000, local governments closed Harrist churches in which the confrontations took place in order to prevent an escalation in the violence (see Section II). Most of the churches were reopened by January 2001 after the restoration of unity within the Harrist church. In January 2001, church members from all throughout the country gathered at the Harrist church in Bingerville, one of the churches that had been closed, to celebrate their restored unity.

There are several examples of interfaith cooperation. Once a year, on New Year's Eve, members of all Christian religious groups gather in the National Stadium in Abidjan to keep a nightlong vigil and pray. When serious social problems have arisen, simultaneous Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim prayer ceremonies have been held in churches, temples, and mosques to ask for divine assistance. Kouassi-Datekro, a town in the Akan region in the eastern part of the country, is famous for ecumenical events involving simultaneous prayer services of all faiths. Since 1990 religious leaders from diverse groups have assembled on their own initiative to mediate in times of political conflict; however, no leaders of traditional indigenous religious groups have been included. On January 25, 2001, the Catholic Archbishop of Abidjan Bernard Agre and other religious leaders attended the funeral of Tidiane Ba, the imam of one of the largest mosques. When the Pope elevated Archbishop Agre to the rank of Cardinal on March 11, 2001, leaders of the Islamic, Protestant, and syncretistic religious groups attended the Cardinal's Mass of Thanksgiving.

In September 1997, the Research Group in Democracy and Social and Economic Development of Cote d'Ivoire (GERDDES-CI), a democracy and civic education group, created the Forum of Religious Confessions. The Forum includes the leaders of many of the country's religious faiths, including Catholics, Muslims, various Protestants groups, several syncretist groups, the Association of Traditional Priests, and the "Bossonists," an association of indigenous Akan religious priests. The Forum is headed by the leader of the Celestial Christian Church, and its objective is to promote dialog, increase understanding, and improve religious leaders' and groups' relationships. The Forum also mediates in times of serious social or political conflicts, as it did in 2000 and 2001 during violent conflict among rival political and student groups (see Section II).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has monitored and reported on the status of religious freedom, developed and maintained contacts with leaders of diverse religious groups, and discussed religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

In 1997 with financial assistance from the Embassy, GERDDES-CI helped religious groups in the country establish a Forum of Religious Confessions, which included all of the main religious groups (see Section III). The Forum continued to meet during the period covered by this report.

DJIBOUTI

The Constitution, while declaring Islam to be the state religion, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, proselytizing is discouraged.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, there were credible reports that the police targeted Ethiopian Pentecostal Christians living illegally in the country when conducting the apprehension and deportation of illegal aliens.

Citizens generally are very tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights, and Embassy officers meet with leaders of religious communities.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 9,000 square miles and its population is estimated at 650,000. Over 99 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim. There are a small number of Catholics, Protestants, and followers of the Baha'i Faith, together accounting for less than 1 percent of the population. There are no known practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Because all citizens officially are considered Muslims if they do not adhere to another faith, there are no figures available on the number of atheists in the country.

The sizable foreign community supports the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches.

A small number of foreign Christian missionary groups operate in the country, including the Eastern Mennonite Mission, Red Sea Team International, and Life International.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution, while declaring Islam to be the state religion, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, proselytizing is discouraged.

Although Islam is the state religion, the Government imposes no sanctions on those who choose to ignore Islamic teachings or practice other faiths. In May 2000, the Government established diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

The Qadi is the country's senior judge of Islamic law and is appointed by the Minister of Justice. The current Qadi was appointed in June 1999. His predecessor was named Minister of State for Charitable and Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Justice. This position was created in May 1999, when newly elected President Ismail Omar Guelleh formed his Cabinet and declared that Islam would be a central tenet of his government.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. There were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious groups.

The country observes the important Muslim holidays as national holidays, including Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, the Prophet Mohammed's birthday, and the Islamic new year. The country also celebrates Christmas as an official holiday.

Religion is not taught in public schools.

Foreign clergy and missionaries are permitted to perform charitable works and to sell religious books. These groups, which focus on humanitarian services in the education and health sectors, reportedly faced no harassment during the period covered by this report. Foreign missionary groups are licensed by the Government to operate schools.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

There is no legal prohibition against proselytizing; however, proselytizing is discouraged. There were a few occasions when members of the Baha'i Faith were detained and questioned by the police regarding possible proselytizing activities; however, they were not charged with a crime and eventually were released.

Islamic law based on the Koran is used only with regard to family matters and is administered by the Qadi. Civil marriage is permitted only for non-Muslim foreigners. Muslims are required to marry in a religious ceremony, and non-Muslim men may only marry a Muslim woman after converting to Islam.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were credible reports that the police targeted Ethiopian Pentecostal Christians living illegally in the country when conducting the apprehension and deportation of illegal aliens.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The large presence of French Catholics and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians for almost a century has led to considerable familiarity and tolerance of other faiths by the Muslim majority. Persons born as Catholics face no discrimination from Muslim relatives. In many cases, these Catholics are children or grandchildren of persons raised in French Catholic orphanages during the colonial period.

In Djiboutian Somali society, clan membership has more influence over a person's life than does religion. Djiboutian Somalis who are Christians often are buried according to Islamic traditions by relatives who do not recognize their non-Muslim faith.

There is no formal interfaith dialog. The Catholic Church organizes an annual celebration with all the other Christian churches. The Qadi receives Ramadan greetings from Pope John Paul II. He meets with the heads of other faiths only at government-organized ceremonies.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy representatives periodically meet with leaders and members of religious communities and with U.S. nongovernmental organizations with a missionary component.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

The Fundamental Law of 1995 provides for freedom of religion; however, in practice the Government limited this right in some respects.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government discourages criticism by religious groups and restricts activities outside church premises.

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

The U.S. Embassy in Cameroon discusses religious freedom issues with the Government during periodic visits to the country in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,831 square miles and its population is 474,214. The population is approximately 93 percent Christian, 5 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, and less than 1 percent each Muslim, Baha'i, other religions, and those who are nonreligious. The principal religion is Roman Catholicism, dating from the Spanish colonial period, when almost the entire population was baptized into this faith. Of the Christian population, approximately 87 percent at least nominally are Catholic, and approximately 4.5 percent belong to Protestant denominations. In practice the actual figure for traditional indigenous religions is

much higher, although the exact figures are unknown. Many baptized Catholics reportedly still follow traditional beliefs. There is no known organized Christian worship in large parts of the country, in particular in the center and north of the mainland and on the smaller islands. The ethnic minorities, such as the Ngumba, Yaka, Puku, and Benga have no known organized religious congregations.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country, both in Bioko and on the mainland, including Seventh Day Adventists, Assemblies of God, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Nondenominational evangelical Christian groups also are present.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1995 Fundamental Law provides for freedom of religion; however, in practice the Government limited this right in some respects.

The Government generally allows preaching, religious teaching, education, and practice by believers. The Government requires permission for any activities outside church walls; however, in practice this requirement does not appear to hinder organized religious groups.

A religious organization must be registered formally with the Ministry of Justice and Religion before its religious activities are allowed. While religious groups must be approved and registered in order to function legally, there were no reports during the period covered by this report that the Government had refused to register any group. However, information regarding the exact procedure for registering a religious denomination was not available. For example, the Assemblies of God received official recognition in 1993; however, from 1987 until 1993, the group was able to operate although it was not recognized officially. The approval process usually takes several years, but such delay apparently is due primarily to general bureaucratic slowness and is not the result of a policy designed to impede the operation of any religious group. The exact number of registered denominations is not available.

Foreign missionaries work throughout the country, generally without impediment.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government and President Teodoro Obiang Nguema's ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) have reacted defensively to any criticism, and the Government continued to restrict freedom of expression of the clergy, particularly regarding any open criticism of the Government.

A 1992 law includes a stated official preference towards the Catholic Church and the Reform Church of Equatorial Guinea due to their traditional roots and well-known influence in the social and cultural life of the populace. For example, a Roman Catholic Mass normally is part of any major ceremonial function such as the October 12 national day. In the past, the Government restricted the activities of the Catholic Church; however, there were no reports of restrictions during the period covered by this report.

Religious study is required in schools and is usually, but not exclusively, Catholic. In the first half of 2001, some schools considered banning a number of Jehovah's Witnesses students from class after their teachers complained that the students would not sing the national anthem. Discussions between the Minister of Justice and Religion and the students' parents resolved the issue.

Autonomous Rural Development (DAR), a Catholic NGO, sometimes is required to have a government delegate present at its meetings. This restriction apparently is in response to government fears that the DAR encourages antigovernment sentiment.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

As of January 2001, the Government no longer requires that Catholic priests obtain government permission before celebrating Mass. This restriction had been put in place in previous years because of the Catholic Church's repeated criticisms of human rights violations, social injustice, and corruption in the country.

In February 1998, security forces arrested a priest, Father Eduardo Losha Belope—a member of the Bubi ethnic group and president of the Malabo chapter of the Catholic nongovernmental organization (NGO), Caritas—in connection with the January 1998 revolt. In January 2001, Father Belope was released as part of a presidential decree reducing sentences for many prisoners.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally are amicable relations between the various religious groups in the country. Some religious groups believe that they face societal pressures within their regions; however, no specific incidents or violence stemming from religious discrimination have been reported, and such concerns may reflect ethnic or individual as much as religious differences.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy based in Yaounde, Cameroon, maintains contact with religious groups, especially American missionaries in the country, and monitors any religious initiatives during periodic visits. During the period covered by this report, embassy staff met with various religious leaders, including members of the Catholic hierarchy, Protestant missionaries, and religiously affiliated NGO's.

ERITREA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government continued to harass, detain, and discriminate against members of the small community of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Citizens generally are very tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion; however, societal attitudes toward Jehovah's Witnesses are the exception to this widespread tolerance. During the period covered by this report, there was a slight reduction in societal hostility toward Jehovah's Witnesses.

The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with leaders of the religious community and the Government's director of religious affairs. Embassy officers have raised the case of Jehovah's Witnesses with government officials.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 48,489 square miles, and its population is approximately 3.5 million. Although reliable statistics are not available, approximately 50 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim and approximately 40 percent are Orthodox Christian. The population also includes a small number of Eastern Rite and Roman Catholics (5 percent), Protestants (2 percent), smaller numbers of Seventh-Day Adventists, and less than 1,500 members of Jehovah's Witnesses. A small minority, perhaps 2 percent, practices traditional indigenous religions. Also present in very small numbers are practicing Buddhists, Hindus, and Baha'is. Generally the population in eastern and western lowlands predominantly is Muslim, and in the highlands the population predominantly is Christian. There are very few atheists. Religious participation is high among all groups.

Within the country's geographic, ethnic, and political concentrations, the majority of members of the Tigrinya ethnic group are Orthodox Christian, with the exception of the Djiberti Tigrinya, who are Muslim. The majority of the Tigre, Saho, Nara, Afar, Rashaida, Beja, and Blen ethnic groups are Muslim. A majority of the Kunama are Roman Catholics or Muslims, and some are practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Approximately 40 percent of the Blen are Christian, the majority of whom are Catholic. The majority of members of the Kunama ethnic group are Catholic, Muslim, and practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. The central and southern highland areas, which generally are more economically developed than the lowlands, predominantly are populated by Christian Tigrinyas, and also some Muslim Djiberti and Saho. The Afar and Rashaida ethnic groups, and some of the Saho and Tigre ethnic groups live in the eastern lowlands. The Blen live on the border between the western lowlands and the central highlands and are concentrated in the Keren area, which also includes a significant minority of Tigre and Tigrinya speakers. The Beja, Kunama, Nara, and the majority of Tigre live in the western lowlands.

Some foreign missionaries operate in the country, including representatives of Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim faiths. There are also several international religious nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) that provide humanitarian aid, including Caritas, Dutch Interchurch Aid, Lutheran Church Aid, and the Mufti's Relief Organization, the relief arm of the Muslim religion. Catholic Relief Services began operating in the country during the period covered by this report.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Constitution provides for the freedom to practice any religion and to "manifest such practice," and Islam and Christianity are practiced widely and tolerated throughout the country with persons free to worship at the mosque or church of their choice; however, the Government continued to harass, detain, and discriminate against members of the small community of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Government does not require religious groups to register; however, because the Government owns all land, any religious organization that seeks facilities for worship other than private homes must seek government approval to build such facilities. There were no reports that the Government refused to approve the use or construction of facilities by any religious organization. Religious organizations, including religious NGO's, do not receive duty free privileges, although they sometimes are allowed to import items under the reduced duty structure used for corporations. The Government prohibits political activity by religious groups, and the Government's Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Local Government monitors religious compliance with this proscription against political activity.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although there were past reports that the Government discouraged proselytizing by members of one faith among adherents of another, and by foreign religious groups and NGO's, the Government permitted such activity during the period covered by this report.

In a 1995 proclamation, the Government described specific guidelines on the role of religion and religiously affiliated NGO's in development and government, stating that development, politics, and public administration are the sole responsibility of the Government and citizens.

The 1995 Proclamation bans religious organizations from involvement in politics and restricts the right of religious media to comment on political matters. Pursuant to the 1995 proclamation, religious organizations are permitted to fund, but not initiate or implement, development projects; however, this proclamation was not enforced in practice—several religious organizations executed small-scale development projects without government interference. The proclamation also set out rules governing relations between religious organizations and foreign sponsors.

Muslims and Roman Catholics were required to pay a Rehabilitation Tax to recover properties that were expropriated by the previous regime; however, the tax was not enforced as rigorously against the Orthodox Church properties.

In April 1998, the authorities informed all religious organizations that all schools run by religious denominations providing general education would be incorporated into the public school system. At the time it was not made clear whether the clerical authorities would continue to administer the curriculum with government oversight or whether the school faculty would be absorbed into the Ministry of Education. However, no action was taken to implement this initiative because of the outbreak of the border conflict with Ethiopia. In 1998 the Government decreed that religiously affiliated organizations were prohibited from running kindergartens; however, this decree was not carried out. According to officials in the Religious Affairs Office, the Government allows religious schools to operate independently as long as they adhere to a standard curriculum.

There are no chaplains in the military; however, military personnel are free to worship at nearby houses of worship.

There were no reports that freedom of religion was restricted in areas under Ethiopian occupation during the period of the occupation.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Jehovah's Witnesses have several churches and members are not barred from meeting in private homes; however, the Government continued to harass, detain, and discriminate against members of the small community of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1994 in accordance with a presidential decree, the Government revoked the trading licenses of some members of Jehovah's Witnesses and dismissed most of those who worked in the civil service. This governmental action resulted in economic, employment, and travel difficulties for many members of Jehovah's Witnesses, especially former civil servants and businessmen. In April 1997, the Government labor office issued a form to all employers in Asmara and the surrounding area requesting information on any government personnel who were members of Jehovah's Witnesses. In addition to these measures, members of Jehovah's Witnesses also often

are denied identification cards, passports, exit visas, trading licenses, and government housing unless they hide their religion.

Most members of Jehovah's Witnesses have refused on religious grounds to participate in national service or to vote. This has led to widespread criticism that members of Jehovah's Witnesses collectively were shirking their civic duty. Some Muslims also have objected to universal national service because of the requirement that women perform military duty. The Government does not excuse individuals who object to national service for religious reasons or reasons of conscience, nor does the Government allow alternative service. Although persons from other religious groups, including Muslims, reportedly have been punished in past years for failure to participate in national service, only members of Jehovah's Witnesses have been subject to dismissal from the civil service, had their trading licenses revoked, been evicted from government-owned housing, and been denied passports, identity cards, and exit visas. However, there were no reports that Jehovah's Witnesses who performed national service and participated in the national independence referendum were subject to discrimination.

In 1998 several members of Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested for failure to comply with national service laws and some were tried, although there is no information available regarding the verdicts or sentences in these cases. At the end of the period covered by this report, four members of Jehovah's Witnesses remained in detention without charge and without being tried for failing to participate in national service. These individuals have been detained for varying periods of time, some for more than 5 years, without charge. The maximum penalty for refusing to do national service is 3 years. Ministry of Justice officials have denied that any members of Jehovah's Witnesses were being held without charges, although they acknowledge that some members of Jehovah's Witnesses and a number of Muslims are in jail serving sentences for convictions on charges of evading national service. There is no indication that any persons are detained or imprisoned solely because of their religious beliefs or practices; however, the Government has singled out members of Jehovah's Witnesses for harsher treatment than that received by members of other faiths for similar actions.

The army resorted to various forms of extreme physical punishment to force objectors, including some members of Jehovah's Witnesses, to perform military service.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Citizens generally are very tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion. Mosques and Christian churches of all orders coexist throughout the country, although Islam tends to predominate in the lowlands and Christianity in the highlands. In Asmara Christian and Muslim holidays are respected by all religions. Some holidays are celebrated jointly.

Societal attitudes toward Jehovah's Witnesses are the exception to widespread religious tolerance. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses generally are disliked and face some societal discrimination because of their refusal to participate in the independence referendum in 1993 and to perform national service, a refusal that is seen widely as unpatriotic. However, in the period covered by this report, there was a slight reduction in societal hostility towards Jehovah's Witnesses.

Church leaders of most denominations, in particular, leaders of the Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant denominations, meet routinely and engage in ongoing efforts to foster cooperation and understanding between religions, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses. Leaders of the four major religious organizations enjoy excellent interfaith relations. In July 2000, in Oslo, Norway, these leaders met with their Ethiopian counterparts for the fourth time in an ecumenical peace effort to resolve the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict.

In 1999 leaders of the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Muslim faiths created Good Deeds in Unity, an organization to help ethnic Eritrean expellees, Eritreans displaced by the war, and other needy persons in the country. This organization works with the government relief agency, the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Affairs Commission.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with leaders of the religious community and the Government's director of religious affairs.

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officers have raised the case of Jehovah's Witnesses with government officials in the President's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Court, the Ministry of Justice, and in media interviews.

ETHIOPIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on occasion local authorities infringed on this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Muslim leaders continued to complain that public school authorities sometimes interfered with their free practice of Islam. Protestant groups occasionally complained that local officials discriminate against them when seeking land for churches and cemeteries.

While the relationship among religions in society is generally amicable, there continued to be pockets of interreligious tension and criticism between followers of evangelical and Pentecostal churches, on the one hand, and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, on the other. During the period covered by this report, a violent conflict broke out between Christians and Muslims.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with the leaders of all of the religious communities.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 699,946 square miles and a total population of approximately 63 million. Over 40 percent of the population adhere to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), the single largest religious group. The EOC claims 50 percent of the country's total population, or more than 31 million adherents, and 110,450 churches. The EOC is predominant in the northern regions of Tigray and Amhara. Approximately 40 percent of the population is Muslim, although many Muslims claim that the actual percentage is higher. Islam is most prevalent in the Somali and Afar regions, as well as in parts of Oromia. Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism are the fastest growing faiths and now constitute more than 10 percent of the population. According to the Evangelical Church Fellowship, there are 7.4 million Protestants, although this figure may be a high estimate. Established Protestant churches such as Mekane Yesus and Kale Hiwot are strongest in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR), western and central Oromia, and in urban areas around the country. There are more than 6,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in the country. Oriental Rite and Latin Rite Roman Catholics, Jews, animists, and other practitioners of traditional indigenous religions make up most of the remaining population. There are very few atheists. Although precise data are not available, active participation in religious services is high throughout the country.

In Addis Ababa and western Gondar in the Amhara region there are very small concentrations of Ethiopian Jews (Falashas) and those who claim that their ancestors were forced to convert from Judaism to Ethiopian Orthodoxy (Feles Mora). Approximately 3,000 Feles Mora migrated voluntarily from the western Amhara region to Addis Ababa in 1991 at the time of "Operation Solomon," when a large number of Falashas were airlifted to Israel. The Feles Mora also seek to immigrate to Israel. The number of Feles Mora in the country at the end of the period covered by this report was approximately 23,000. Israeli officials evaluate the Feles Mora immigration claims on a case-by-case basis and estimate that by the end of 2000 approximately 100 individuals were immigrating to Israel under Israel's law of return each week. Approximately 2,000 claims are processed annually by the Israeli Embassy in Addis Ababa. All of the eligible Falashas in the country had immigrated to Israel by December 1999.

A large number of foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Catholic and American Protestant missionaries. Protestant organizations, operating under the umbrella of the 12-member Evangelical Church Fellowship of Ethiopia, sponsor or support missionary work: the Baptist Bible Fellowship, the New Covenant Baptist Church, the Baptist Evangelical Association, Mekane Yesus Church (associated with the Lutheran Church), Kale Hiwot Church (associated with Sim-Service in Mission), Hiwot Berhan Church (associated with the Swedish Philadelphia Church), Genet Church (associated with the Finnish Mission), Lutheran-Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia, Emnet Christos, Muluwongel (Full Gospel) Church,

and Messerete Kristos (associated with the Mennonite Mission). There is also missionary activity among Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on occasion local authorities infringed on this right. The Constitution requires the separation of religion and the state and prohibits a state religion, and the Government respects these rights in practice.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. Religious institutions, like nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), are registered with the Ministry of Justice, and must renew their registration every year. Unlike NGO's, religious groups are not subject to a rigorous registration process. Under current law, a religious organization that undertakes development activities must register its development wing separately as an NGO. Religious groups are not accorded duty-free status. Religious groups are given free government land for churches, schools, hospitals, and cemeteries; however, the title to the land remains with the Government, and the land, other than that used for prayer houses or cemeteries, can be taken back at any time. Unlike in previous years, Jehovah's Witnesses were allotted land by the Government outside of Addis Ababa; however, because there are no unoccupied lots available in Addis Ababa, Jehovah's Witnesses residing there lease land from private owners. Religious groups, like private individuals or businesses, must apply to regional and local governments for land allocation. An interfaith effort was underway at the end of the period covered by this report to promote revision of the law in order for religious organizations to obtain duty-free status.

The Government officially recognizes both Christian and Muslim holidays, and has mandated a 2-hour lunch break on Fridays to allow Muslims to go to a mosque to pray. The Government also agreed to a request from Muslim students at Addis Ababa Commercial College to delay the start of afternoon classes until 1:30 p.m. to permit them to perform afternoon prayers at a nearby mosque.

When the Government began deporting Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin in 1998, it decided that Jehovah's Witnesses of Eritrean origin, who might face religious persecution in Eritrea, were not to be subject to deportation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government does not issue work visas to foreign religious workers unless they are attached to the development wing of a religious organization.

Evangelical leaders have complained of strict regulations on the importation of Bibles, as well as heavy customs duty on Bibles and other religious articles; however, Bibles and religious articles are subject to the same customs duty as all imported books and most imported items.

Muslim leaders complained that public school authorities sometimes interfered with their free practice of Islam. Certain public school teachers in the SNNPR, Addis Ababa, and in the Amhara region objected to Muslim schoolgirls covering their heads with scarves while at school. In September 1999, Muslim girls who had boycotted classes in Woldeia in the Amhara region over the issue of wearing headscarves to class, returned to classes with their scarves. Muslim leaders stated that in some schools, Muslim girls go without head coverings in order to avoid similar problems.

The Government has interpreted the constitutional provision for separation of religion and state to mean that religious instruction is not permitted in schools, whether they are public or private schools. Catholic, Orthodox, evangelical, and Muslim-owned and operated schools are not permitted to teach religion as a course of study. Most private schools teach morals courses as part of school curricula, and the Government Education Bureau in Addis Ababa has complained that such courses are not free of religious influence. Churches are permitted to have Sunday schools, the Koran is taught at mosques, and public schools permit the formation of clubs, including those of a religious nature.

Minority religious groups have complained of discrimination in the allocation of government land for religious sites. Protestant groups occasionally complain that local officials discriminate against them when seeking land for churches and cemeteries. Evangelical leaders have complained that because they are perceived as "newcomers" they remain at a disadvantage compared with the EOC and the Supreme Islamic Council when it comes to the allocation of land. The Supreme Islamic Council has complained that it has more difficulty obtaining land from the govern-

ment bureaucracy than the EOC. Jehovah's Witnesses have stated that due to the lack of good donated plots in the capital, they have purchased their own.

In January 1998, the Government returned evangelical church property that was seized under the Mengistu regime (including the Mekane Yesus Church headquarters, which served as Federal Police headquarters until 1997); however, the Government still has not returned other properties to the Mekane Yesus Church, including three student hostels and two schools. The Government also has not returned to the Seventh-Day Adventists properties taken by the prior regime, including two hospitals. The Supreme Islamic Council continued to try to obtain properties that were confiscated outside of the capital under the Derg regime.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On January 19, 2001, in Harar, a riot broke out between Muslims and Christians (see Section III); the army was called in to restore order and reportedly shot and killed five persons. Authorities detained 14 persons during the incident, and at the end of the period covered by this report, 194 persons were being held in detention on charges of participating in mob activity resulting in the destruction of property, inflicting bodily harm, and disturbing the peace; their cases were pending before the court. No action was taken against any of the army officers who were involved in the incident.

In December 2000, Samson Seyoum Kebede, the former editor of GOH, fled the country. In 1999 Seyoum was convicted on charges of incitement to war and attempting to spread Islamic fundamentalism; he was sentenced to 4½ years' imprisonment, but was released pending an appeal of his conviction. Under the Press Law, it is a crime to incite one religion against another.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Despite the country's broad level of religious freedom and tolerance for established faiths, there were instances of open conflict among religious groups before 1998, most noticeably between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians on the one hand, and Pentecostals and evangelicals on the other, and there continued to be pockets of interreligious tension and criticism during the period covered by this report. Newer faiths such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals have encountered overt opposition from the public. Muslims and Orthodox Christians complain about proselytization by Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses. Ethiopian Orthodox leaders complain that sometimes Protestants fail to respect Orthodox holy days and Orthodox customs. Muslims complain that some Pentecostal preachers disparage Islam in their services. There were complaints by Muslim leaders that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's desire to "show supremacy" sometimes caused irritation in the regions. In previous years, Orthodox and evangelical adherents attempted on a few occasions to prevent the construction of Protestant and Pentecostal churches in predominately Orthodox or evangelical areas; however, there were no such cases reported during the period covered by this report.

On January 19, 2001, in Harar, a riot broke out between Muslims and Christians after several members of a Christian procession entered a mosque and disrupted Muslim services. Both groups accused each other of destroying religious property. After the local police were no longer able to control the rioting, the army was called in to restore order and reportedly shot and killed five persons; it is not known whether the rioters fired weapons in return. In January and February 2001, the EOC and the Supreme Islamic Council worked together and with local, regional, and national level government representatives in Harar to restore relations between the two faiths.

Although in the previous year there were credible reports that the bodies of non-Orthodox Christians had been disinterred from Orthodox cemeteries and left exposed outside the cemetery grounds, there were no such complaints in the period covered by this report.

In most sections of the country Orthodox Christians and Muslims participate in each other's religious observances, and there is tolerance for intermarriage and conversion in certain areas, most notably in Welo, as well as in urban areas throughout the country. In the capital, Addis Ababa, persons of different faiths often live side-by-side. Most urban areas reflect a mixture of all religious denominations. Long-standing evangelical Protestant denominations, particularly the Mekane Yesus

Church and Kale Hiwot Churches, provide social services such as health care and education to nonmembers as well as to members.

In July 2000, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the chairman of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church and the president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus met with their Eritrean counterparts and issued a joint statement appealing for peace and reconciliation between the two countries. The two groups of religious leaders have also met subsequently to continue their work on this issue.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with the leaders of all of the religious communities. Embassy officers made an active effort to visit all of the religious groups and religious NGO's during the period covered by this report. Embassy officers met with the Supreme Islamic Council, Sim-Serving in Mission, Mekane Yesus, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Catholic Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Ambassador continued to hold regular meetings with religious leaders, including the Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarch and the president of the Supreme Islamic Council to discuss their responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Ambassador also met with the Vatican Papal Nuncio, the executive director of the Mekane Yesus Church, the director of Sim-Serving in Mission, and the president of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to discuss the status of religious freedom and development issues. The U.S. Ambassador remains in regular contact with the American Joint Distribution Committee to discuss the situation of the country's Jewish population.

In 1998 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) entered into a 5-year agreement with the Ethiopian Orthodox Development Assistance Authority to provide food commodities and grants to support food security programs in four areas. The value of the program during the period covered by this report was approximately \$4,043,000.

In August 1999, USAID signed an agreement with the EOC, and during the period covered by this report, gave \$195,370 to the EOC to support programs to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS. The development section of Mekane Yesus Church has been a USAID contractor since 1996. During the period covered by this report, USAID donated \$264,341 to Mekane Yesus for family planning programs. In May 2000, USAID awarded the Ethiopian Moslem Development Agency a grant to support programs to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS, and donated \$150,151 to the organization for this purpose during the period covered by this report.

GABON

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 103,347 square miles and its population is 1,225,000. Major religions practiced in the country include Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism), Islam, and traditional indigenous religions. Government statistics indicate that approximately 60 percent of the country's citizens practice Christianity, almost 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, and only 1 percent practice Islam. However, Muslims make up a much larger proportion of the total population, especially among noncitizens. Many persons practice both elements of Christianity and elements of traditional indigenous religions. It is estimated that approximately 73 percent of the population practice at least some elements of Christianity, about 12 percent practice Islam, about 10 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively, and about 5 percent practice no religion or are atheists.

Noncitizens constitute approximately 20 percent of the population. A significant portion of these noncitizens come from countries in West Africa with large Muslim populations. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of the 12 percent of the total population who practice Islam are foreigners. However, the country's President is a member of the Muslim minority.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. A 1983 decree banning Jehovah's Witnesses, which the Government promulgated on the grounds that Jehovah's Witnesses allegedly do not protect adequately individuals who might dissent from the group's views, remained in effect; however, the Government did not enforce the ban.

The Ministry of the Interior maintains an official registry of some religious groups; however, it does not register traditional religious groups. The Government does not require religious groups to register but recommends that they do so in order to assemble with full constitutional protection. No financial or tax benefit is conferred by registration.

Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant denominations operate primary and secondary schools in the country. These schools are required to register with the Ministry of Education, which is charged with ensuring that these religious schools meet the same standards required for public schools. The Government does not contribute funds to private schools, whether religious or secular.

Both Catholic and Protestant radio stations broadcast in the country.

The Government promotes interfaith relations by facilitating meetings of leaders of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and the Islamic Council. Such meetings are held periodically, usually once every year or every other year.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government has refused to register approximately 10 religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses. In practice the Government allows Jehovah's Witnesses to assemble and practice their religion. In addition the Government has made uncorroborated claims that it permitted Jehovah's Witnesses to proselytize.

Some Protestants alleged that the government television station accorded free transmission time to the Catholic Church but not to minority religious groups. Others alleged that the armed forces favor Roman Catholics and Muslims in hiring and promotion. Some Protestant pastors allege that local officials discriminate against them by making it difficult to obtain building permits to construct churches.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the different religions are amicable. There were no reports of interreligious violence or intrareligious incidents during the period covered by this report.

There were occasional incidents of violence in which practitioners of some traditional indigenous religions inflicted bodily harm on other persons; however, the details of these incidents were uncertain. The Ministry of the Interior maintained that violence and bodily harm to others in the practice of a traditional religion is a criminal offense and is prosecuted vigorously. Media reports suggested that this was true; however, little information about such prosecutions or their results was available.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials have met with leaders of the Catholic Church, as well as the Islamic Superior Council. Contacts are maintained with the Ministry of Interior to discuss the general state of religion in the country. The Embassy also maintains close contacts with various Christian missionary groups in the country.

THE GAMBIA

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

Government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion during the period covered by this report, and the Government amicably resolved the dispute regarding the imam of the Brikama mosque.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 3,861 square miles, and its population is 1,367,124. Muslims constitute over 90 percent of the population. The main Muslim branches are Tijaniyah, Qadiriya, Muridiyah, and Ahmadiyah. Except for the Ahmadiyah, all branches pray together at common mosques. An estimated 9 percent of the population practice Christianity and 1 percent practice traditional indigenous religions. The Christian community is predominantly Roman Catholic; there also are several Protestant denominations, including Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and various small Protestant evangelical denominations. There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government does not require religious groups to register. Religiously based nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) are subject to the same registration and licensing requirements as other NGO's.

In December 2000 and January 2001, after President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh reportedly mentioned the issue of Shari'a during a meeting with religious leaders, religious leaders, political figures, and the public engaged in a series of discussions and radio and newspaper editorials about the merits of Shari'a law. In response to these deliberations, the government announced that it had no intention of implementing Shari'a law.

The Government permits and does not limit religious instruction in schools. Bible and Koranic studies are provided in both public and private schools throughout the country without Government restriction or interference. Religious instruction in public schools is provided at government expense, but is not mandatory.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government's dispute with the imam of Brikama mosque ended amicably. In May 1998, the imam of the largest mosque in Brikama was arrested together with a leading opposition party politician and eight others in a dispute over minor construction work at a mosque that reportedly was financed by supporters of the ruling party. In February 1999, the High Court acquitted all of the defendants of destruction of property and discharged the case. However, the Government filed an appeal in the High Court for the imam and three others to be retried. The imam's lawyer filed a writ of summons in the High Court, which ruled that it had no jurisdiction over the matter and referred the case to a district tribunal. Subsequently, the case was filed at the Court of Appeal, but the case was adjourned until April 2001. In April 2001, the Government dropped its appeal of the High Court's decision to let the imam resume leading prayers, and the imam was reinstated fully at that time.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities. Inter-marriage between members of different religious groups is legal and socially acceptable.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting of human rights.

GHANA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some limits on this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In October 2000, government officials, including police, supported the forced polio vaccination of children in a local church. The Government does not always prosecute those responsible for religious violence.

Tension persists between a segment of the Christian community and traditional authorities over the annual ban on drumming in the ethnic Ga traditional area. An agreement reached in 2000 between local churches and Ga leaders to prevent violence was not adhered to in 2001; as a result, there were sporadic clashes between church members and Ga youth. The country's legal code prohibits ritual or customary servitude; however, *Trokosi*, a form of religious indoctrination and forced servitude, exists on a limited scale.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy has supported civil society efforts to address religious freedom issues.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 92,000 square miles, and its population is 19.5 million. Approximately 40 percent of the country's population are at least nominally Christian. Approximately 30 percent of the population adhere to traditional indigenous religions or other religions. Approximately 25 percent of the population are Muslim. Other religions include the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Ninchiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Sera, Sat Sang, Eckanker, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna, Rastafarianism, and other international faiths, as well as some separatist or spiritual churches or cults, which include elements of Christianity and traditional beliefs such as magic and divination. *Zetahil*, a small practice unique to Ghana, combines elements of Christianity and Islam. Some consider the ethnic Ga tradition to be a religion. There are no statistics available for the percentage of atheists in the country. Atheism, as such, does not have a strong presence, as most persons have some spiritual and traditional beliefs.

Christian denominations include Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Mennonite, Evangelical Presbyterian, Presbyterian, African Methodist Episcopal Zionist, Christian Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, F'eden, numerous charismatic faiths, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventist, Pentecostal, Baptist, and the Society of Friends. Christianity often includes an overlay of traditional beliefs. Reportedly, only 1.9 million of those persons who profess the Christian faith actually attend church. However, this figure appears to be lower than the actual number of persons who attend services.

Traditional indigenous religions include a belief in a supreme being, referred to by the Akan ethnic group as *Nyame* or by the Ewe ethnic group as *Mawu*, and lesser gods who act as intermediaries between the supreme being and man on earth. Veneration of ancestors also is a characteristic of traditional indigenous religions because ancestors also provide a link between the supreme being and the living and may be reincarnated at times. The religious leaders of those sharing these diverse beliefs commonly are referred to as priests and are trained in the arts of healing and divination. These priests typically operate shrines to the supreme deity or to one of the lesser gods, relying upon the donations of the public to maintain the shrine and for their own maintenance. One known group, *Afrikania*, also known as the *Afrikan Renaissance Mission (ARM)*, actively supports what it claims to be traditional religious practices. *Afrikania* often criticizes the Government, foreign diplomatic missions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) for corrupting tradi-

tional values and imposing foreign religious beliefs. It is not known how much support there is for Afrikania or how many members it has.

Three principal branches of Islam are represented in the country: the orthodox Sunnis and Tijanis, and the less orthodox Ahmadis. The Shi'a branch virtually is absent from the country's Islamic community.

The majority of the Muslim population is concentrated in the urban centers of Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tamale, and Wa. The majority of the followers of more traditional religions mainly reside in the rural areas of the country. Christians live throughout the country.

Religions considered to be "foreign" include the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Ninchiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Sera, Sat Sang, Eckanker, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna, and Rastafarianism.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely in the country, including Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Mormon groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some limits on this right.

Religious institutions that wish to have formal government recognition are required to register with the Registrar General's Department. This is a formality only, and there were no reports that the Government denied registration to any group. Most traditional religions, with the exception of the Afrikania Mission, do not register. Formally recognized religions are exempt from paying taxes on ecclesiastical, charitable, and educational activities that do not generate income from trade or business; however, religious organizations are required to pay taxes on business activities that generate income.

Government employees, including the President, are required to swear an oath upon taking office; however, this oath can be either religious or secular, depending on the wishes of the person taking the oath.

Foreign missionary groups operated in the country with a minimum of formal requirements and without restrictions.

The Government took some steps to promote interfaith understanding. At government meetings and receptions there is usually a multid denominational invocation. Often religious leaders from various faiths are present. In June 2001, Parliament formed a joint committee to address problems surrounding the annual ban on drumming in the Ga traditional area prior to the Homowo Festival (see Section III).

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government does not always prosecute those responsible for religiously motivated attacks. For example, none of those who attacked churches during the 1998 or 1999 annual ban on drumming (see Section III) were arrested or charged with an offense. Police authorities stated that pursuing the cases would exacerbate religious tensions.

The Catholic Church in the archdiocese of Accra officially suspended a priest for conducting unorthodox "healing" services. His superiors called his actions a failure to comply with his vows of obedience and a lack of responsibility and respect toward his superiors—especially the Bishop. In August 1999, when the accused priest was conducting one of these healing services, the gates to the cathedral were locked, and police personnel prevented worshipers from entering the church premises. In April 2000, church authorities removed the priest from the parish after conducting an internal investigation.

The Government requires that all students in public schools up to the equivalent of senior secondary school level attend a daily "assembly" or devotional service; however, in practice this regulation is not always enforced. This is a Christian service and includes the recital of The Lord's Prayer, a Bible reading, and a blessing. Students at the senior secondary school level are required to attend a similar assembly three times a week. Students attending government-administered boarding school are required to attend a non-denominational service on Sundays. However, in September 2000, officials from the Ministry of Education met with the Ghana Muslim Students' Association (GMSA) to discuss a petition concerning acts of discrimination against Muslims in some institutional organizations. Following the meeting, the Director General of the Ghana Education Service announced new regulations for all public educational institutions, including the stipulation that students of minority ethnic groups should not be forced by school authorities to worship with the majority religious groups in school; however, the regulations were not finalized or published by the end of the period covered by this report. Afrikania also publicly has

urged the Government to stop requiring Christian “indoctrination” of children in all government-funded schools.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On October 5, 2000, a government medical team, assisted by the police, forcibly immunized approximately 40 children from the First Century Gospel Church (Faith) in Jamestown, Accra, against poliomyelitis. When church members resisted the team’s attempts to conduct the immunizations, police arrested seven persons, including the church’s pastor. Church doctrine does not allow the administration of modern medicine to its members, and according to local reports, health teams had been prevented from immunizing the children for several years. Reports indicated that the local community supported the immunizations as being in the greater national interest.

Belief in witchcraft is still strong in many parts of the country. Rural women can be banished by traditional village authorities or their families for suspected witchcraft. Most accused witches are older women, often widows, who are identified by fellow villagers as the cause of difficulties, such as illness, crop failure, or financial misfortune. Many of these banished women go to live in “witchcamps,” villages in the north populated by suspected witches. The women do not face formal legal sanction if they return home; however, most fear that they may be beaten or lynched if they return to their villages. In the past, there were reports that forced labor occurred in witchcamps; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report. Legislation passed in 1998 provides protection to alleged witches. In the past, human rights NGO’s estimated that the number of occupants of the witches’ camp was growing; however, there are no definitive statistics on the number of women living in northern witchcamps, and international and domestic observers estimate that there are fewer than 850 women in the camps. The CHRAJ and human rights NGO’s have mounted a campaign to end this traditional practice, but have met with little success. Various organizations provide food, medical care, and other forms of support to the residents of the camp.

In addition to banishment, suspected witches are subject to violence and lynching. For example, in April 2001, a man living in Tongor in the Volta Region chopped off the hands of a 75-year-old aunt, claiming that she was a witch. Police arrested the assailant, but there were no further developments in the case by the end of the period covered by this report.

In August 2000, an 80-year-old woman in the Volta region was brought before a community tribunal when a local teacher accused her of being a witch. In his statement to the tribunal, the teacher said his bank account was out of money, animals had been eating the produce on his farm, and he recently had become impotent, all of which he attributed to witchcraft on the part of the woman. The tribunal ruled that the woman had to compensate the teacher with a portion of rum, a pot of palm wine, and \$6 (2,000 cedis). In April 2001, the local press reported that the woman took the case to the CHRAJ and filed a suit in circuit court against the tribunal members and the teacher, claiming that the accusation of witchcraft and subsequent tribunal hearing subjected her to slander and public humiliation. There were no further developments in the case during the period covered by this report.

Although the country’s legal code prohibits ritual or customary servitude, Trokosi, a form of religious indoctrination and forced servitude, exists on a limited scale. In June 1998, Parliament passed, and the President signed, comprehensive legislation to protect women and children’s rights that included a ban on ritual servitude, which many activists interpreted to include Trokosi. According to human rights groups, such as International Needs, that have been campaigning against Trokosi for years, the practice has decreased in recent years because other belief systems have gained followers, and fetish priests who die have not been replaced (see Section III). Reports on the number of women and girls bound to various Trokosi shrines vary; according to some reports, there are more than 2,000 women or girls in Trokosi shrines, but according to other international observers, shrines generally have 4 or fewer girls serving them at any time, and there are no more than 100 girls serving at Trokosi shrines throughout the Volta Region.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities, and spokesmen for these communities often advocate tolerance toward different religions; however, there was some tension among some religious groups. Public debate continued over religious worship versus traditional practices and respect for the rights and customs of others in a diverse society.

During the period covered by this report, there was continued tension between practitioners of the ethnic Ga tradition (the Ga are the original inhabitants of Accra, and some consider the Ga tradition to be a religion) and members of some charismatic churches over the annual ban by Ga traditional leaders on drumming and noise-making prior to the Ga "Homowo" (harvest) festival. Traditionalists believe that their time-honored beliefs should be accorded due respect, while some Christians resent the imposition of bans, which they believe infringes on their right to worship as they please. In April 2000, religious and traditional leaders agreed to modify the ban, requiring drumming to be subdued and confined to the churches. However, on August 20, 2000, youth in Teshie (Greater Accra Region) attacked the Open Heaven Mission International Church, seized drums and injured six worshippers.

On May 7, 2001, the first day of the ban, the Ga Traditional Council (GTC) announced that the agreement it had reached with local churches in 2000 was not applicable for 2001 and that the ban would apply to all drumming and noise-making. Christian churches countered that the ban was unconstitutional and that they would not observe it. Several incidents of violence were reported during the 2001 ban on drumming. On May 13, 2001, groups of young men attacked and damaged two charismatic churches, resulting in a number of injuries. On May 20, 2001, the second Sunday of the ban, groups of young men attacked additional charismatic churches and stole musical equipment and money. On May 23, 2001, the Forum of Religious Bodies in Ghana issued a statement, which was signed by seven religious councils, calling for peaceful coexistence and further negotiation with the GTC; however, a GTC leader stated that no agreement had been reached with the churches, and that he did not endorse any compromise. Although no agreement was reached, there were no reports of violence during the final two Sundays of the ban.

There were occasional reports of interreligious and intrareligious incidents but no violent incidents based on religious affiliation. There were no reports of intra-Muslim violence during the period covered by this report. On July 21, 2000, three Muslims were injured at Effiduase (Eastern Region) in a clash between two Muslim sects over doctrinal differences. Members of the Tijanniya school of Islam allegedly attacked members of the Al-Sunna school. The cases of those arrested following intra-Muslim clashes in Wenchi and Kumasi in 1998 were pending with the attorney general at the end of the period covered by this report.

Although the country's legal code prohibits ritual or customary servitude, Trokosi, a form of religious indoctrination and forced servitude that involves a period of servitude lasting up to 3 years, exists on a very limited scale. Trokosi, a traditional religious practice found primarily among the Ewe ethnic group in the Volta region, is a system in which a virgin girl, sometimes under the age of 10, is given by her family to work and be trained in traditional religion at a fetish shrine for up to 3 years as a means of atonement for a serious crime, such as rape or murder, allegedly committed by a member of the girl's family. In exceptional cases, when a girl of suitable age or status is unavailable, a boy can be offered. The girl becomes the property of the shrine god and the charge of the shrine priest for the duration of her stay. As a charge of the priest, the girl works in the shrine, which may include work on the shrine's farm, and undergoes instruction in the traditional indigenous religion. In the past, there were reports that the girls were the sexual property of the priests; however, while instances of abuse may occur on a case-by-case basis, there is no evidence that sexual or physical abuse is an ingrained or systematic part of the practice. The girl's family must provide for the girl's needs during her stay, including food and clothing; however, in some cases families are unable to do so. After the girl has completed her service to the shrine, her family can obtain her release by providing items or money to the shrine for a final ritual. In occasional cases, the family abandons the girl or cannot afford the costs of the final rites, in which case the girl remains at the shrine indefinitely. Even when freed from the shrine, a Trokosi woman generally has few marketable skills and, depending on the customs of her village, may have difficulty getting married. In some instances, when a Trokosi woman dies, her family may replace her with another young girl, thus continuing the association of the family to the shrine from generation to generation. In the past, there were reports that more than 2,000 women and girls were bound to various Trokosi shrines; however, according to domestic and international observ-

ers, shrines generally have 4 or fewer girls serving them at any time, and there are no more than 100 girls serving at Trokosi shrines throughout the Volta Region.

In June 1998, Parliament passed, and the President signed, comprehensive legislation to protect women and children's rights that included a ban on ritual servitude, which many activists interpreted to include Trokosi. According to human rights groups, such as International Needs, that have been campaigning against Trokosi for years, the practice has decreased in recent years because other belief systems have gained followers, and fetish priests who die have not been replaced. Adherents of Trokosi describe it as a practice based on traditional African religious beliefs; however, the Government does not recognize it as a religion.

On January 25, 2001, members of the Christo Asafo Christian church clashed with members of the Boade Baaka traditional shrine at Taifa, greater Accra region. The dispute arose days earlier after shrine members accused a Christian woman of witchcraft. In the process, the woman was injured slightly and a crowd formed. Christo Asafo members attacked the shrine in retaliation. There were some minor injuries. Police did not arrest or prosecute any of the participants, but they continued to investigate the incident during the period covered by this report.

The clergy and other religious leaders actively discourage religiously motivated violence, discrimination, or harassment.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy monitors religious freedom in the country and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Embassy officers meet periodically with various leaders of religious and traditional communities in the country. In May and July 2001, Embassy officials met with the leadership of the Afrikania (traditionalist) religion in order to learn about their views on religious freedom in the country. The Afrikania leaders expressed gratitude for the visit and noted that the U.S. Embassy was the first foreign mission to meet with them.

The U.S. Embassy supported dialog between religious leaders and civil society. In February 2001, the U.S. Ambassador and the new Greater Accra Regional Minister discussed the conflict over the annual ban on drumming between the Ga community and local charismatic churches. The Ambassador urged the new administration to take an active role in preventing violence in 2001, as the previous regional administration had done in 2000.

GUINEA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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; however, the Government reportedly favors Muslims over non-Muslims.

Relations between the various religions are generally amicable; however, in some areas, strong social pressure discourages non-Muslims from practicing their religion openly, and the Government tends to defer to local Muslim sensibilities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 94,926 square miles, and its population is 7,164,823. Islam is demographically, socially, and culturally the dominant religion. According to credible estimates, some 85 percent of the population adheres to Islam, 10 percent follow various Christian faiths, and 5 percent hold traditional indigenous beliefs. Muslims in the country generally adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam; adherents of the Shi'a branch remain relatively few, although they are increasing in number. Among the Christian groups, there are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventist, and other Christian evangelical churches active in the country and recognized by the Government. There is a small Baha'i community. There are small numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, and practitioners of traditional Chinese religions among the expatriate community. Few, if any, citizens profess atheism.

Geographically, Muslims are a majority in all four major regions. Christians are most numerous in the capital, in lower Guinea, and in the forest region. Christians are found in all large towns throughout the country, with the exception of the Fouta Jallon region of middle Guinea, where the Puhlar (or Fulani or Peuhl) ethnic group opposes the establishment of religious communities other than Islamic ones. Traditional indigenous religions are most prevalent in the forest region.

No data is available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals; however, the National Islamic League estimates that 70 percent of Muslims practice their faith regularly.

Although there are no known organized heterogeneous or syncretistic religious communities, both Islam and Christianity have developed syncretistic tendencies, which reflect the continuing influence and acceptability of traditional indigenous beliefs and rituals.

The country's large immigrant and refugee populations generally practice the same faiths as citizens, although those from neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone have higher percentages of Christians and adherents of traditional indigenous religions.

Foreign missionary groups are active in the country and include Roman Catholic, Philafricaine, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and many American missionary societies.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government requires that all recognized Christian churches join the Association of Churches and Missions in order to benefit from certain government privileges such as tax benefits and energy subsidies.

A government-sponsored organization, the National Islamic League (NIL), represents the country's Sunni Muslim majority, which comprises some 85 percent of the population. The National Islamic League's stated policy is to promote better relations with other religious denominations and dialog aimed at ameliorating inter-ethnic and interreligious tensions. Although the Government and the NIL have spoken out against the proliferation of Shi'a fundamentalist groups on the grounds that they "generate confusion and deviation" within the country's Islamic family, they have not restricted the religious activities of these groups.

The small Baha'i community practices its faith openly and freely, although it is not officially recognized; however, it is unknown whether the community has asked for official recognition.

Missionary groups are required to make a declaration of their aims and activities to the Ministry of Interior or to the National Islamic League. With rare exceptions, foreign missionary groups and church-affiliated relief agencies operate freely in the country. There were no reports during the period covered by this report that government officials obstructed or limited missionary activities by Jehovah's Witnesses.

There were no reports that the Government required government ministers to take an oath on either the Koran or the Bible, a requirement that provoked criticism when it was imposed—apparently for the only time—in April 1999.

Both Muslim and Christian holidays are recognized by the Government and celebrated by the population.

The government-controlled official press reports on religious events involving both Islamic and Christian groups.

The Government does not have a specific program to promote interfaith understanding; however, the Government utilizes all religious groups in its civic education efforts and national prayers for peace.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government support of the powerful, semi-official National Islamic League has led some non-Muslims to complain that the Government uses its influence to favor Muslims over non-Muslims, although non-Muslims are represented in the Cabinet, administrative bureaucracy, and the armed forces. Conversions of senior officials to Islam, such as the Defense Minister, are ascribed to the NIL's efforts to influence the religious beliefs of senior government leaders. The Government refrains from appointing non-Muslims to important administrative positions in certain parts of the country, in deference to the particularly strong social dominance of Islam in these regions. In July 2000, the Government announced that it would finance the renova-

tion of Conakry's grand mosque, the mosque at which President Conte practices; however, no action was taken during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religions are generally amicable; however, in some parts of the country, Islam's dominance is such that there is strong social pressure that discourages non-Muslims from practicing their religion openly.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains contact with clergy and religious leaders from all major religious communities, monitors developments affecting religious freedom, and discusses religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

GUINEA-BISSAU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 10,811 square miles and its population is 1,285,715. Approximately half the population follows traditional indigenous religious practices. Approximately 45 percent of the population are Muslim and about 5 percent are Christian. There are few atheists.

Christians belong to a number of groups, including the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. The Muslim population is concentrated in the Fula and Mandinka ethnic groups, and Muslims generally live in the north and northeast. Christians are concentrated in Bissau and other large towns. Practitioners of traditional religions inhabit the remainder of the country.

Missionaries from numerous Christian denominations have long been active.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government requires that religious groups be licensed; however, no applications have been refused. There were no reports that new applications were made during the period covered by this report.

All religions were tolerated prior to the outbreak of civil conflict in June 1998, and there have been no reports of discrimination based on religious belief since that time. Historically political affiliation has not been related directly to ethnic or religious affiliation. Members of all major faiths are represented in the Interim Government that was inaugurated in February 1999, in the National Assembly.

Numerous foreign missionary groups operate in the country without restriction. While many missionaries left following the June 1998 conflict, others stayed and continue to operate unmolested.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. Society is tolerant on religious matters.

There have been no reports of significant ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

There has been no official U.S. presence in the country since June 1998;¹ however, the U.S. Embassy based in Dakar, Senegal, discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

KENYA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, while groups generally were allowed to worship freely, the Government at times interfered with other activities by religious groups.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government at times restricted or disrupted public meetings that religious groups organized or participated in, primarily for political reasons. Muslim leaders charge that the Government is hostile towards Muslims.

There generally is a great level of tolerance among religious groups; however, there were a few instances of violence between Christian and Muslim groups, and Muslims continued to perceive themselves to be treated as second-class citizens in a predominantly Christian country. There are some interfaith movements and political alliances, including the Ufungamano Initiative on constitutional reform, which was led jointly by Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 225,000 square miles and its population is approximately 29 million, of which approximately 88 percent live in rural areas. According to rough estimates, Protestants are the largest religious group representing approximately 38 percent of the population. Approximately 28 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, while an estimated 10 to 20 percent are Muslim. Hinduism is practiced by 1 percent of the population, and the remainder follow various traditional indigenous religions or offshoots of Christian religions. There are very few atheists.

Members of most religious groups are active throughout the country. Muslims are concentrated chiefly in the coastal areas and the north and northeastern parts of the country. Muslims also are present in significant numbers in urban centers throughout the country.

Foreign missionary groups of many faiths operate in the country.

Certain religions dominate in particular regions of the country. For example, the Northeast Province is vastly Muslim; the Eastern Province is approximately 50 percent Muslim (mostly in the north) and 50 percent Christian (mostly in the south); and the Coast Province almost entirely is Muslim, except for the western areas of

¹Note: The U.S. Embassy remains closed following suspension of operations on June 14, 1998, at the outset of civil conflict that ended in May 1999. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar is responsible for U.S. interests in Guinea-Bissau. Sources of information about the situation of religious believers and other circumstances inside Guinea-Bissau are very limited.

the province, which predominantly are Christian. The rest of the country largely is Christian, with some persons practicing traditional indigenous religions.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, while groups generally were allowed to worship freely, the Government at times interfered with other activities by religious groups.

The Government requires new religious organizations to register with the Registrar of Societies, which reports to the Office of the Attorney General. The Government allows traditional indigenous religious organizations to register, although many choose not to do so. Once registered religious organizations enjoy tax-free status, and clergy are not subject to duty on purchased goods. Religious organizations generally receive equal treatment from the Government; however, some small splinter groups have found it difficult to register due to their inability to define their status as more than an offshoot of a larger religious organization. The Government has not granted registration to the Tent of the Living God, a small Kikuyu religious order banned during the single-party era (pre-1992). However, with the arrival of a multiparty system in 1992, the Tent of the Living God virtually has disappeared.

Foreign missionary groups of various faiths operate in the country, and the Government generally has permitted their assistance to the poor and their founding of schools and hospitals. The missionaries openly promote their religious beliefs and have encountered little resistance.

In 1998 the Ministry of Information, Transport, and Communication approved radio and television broadcast licenses for a Muslim group and for a Christian group. In 1999 the Ministry licensed an Islamic radio station and three Catholic television stations. The Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) operates the Muslim Iqra Radio Station, which provides information, educational programming, and entertainment for Muslim audiences in Nairobi and began broadcasting in July 2000. At the end of 2000, the Catholic Church had been assigned regional broadcasting frequencies, but not national frequencies; its petition for national frequencies was not resolved by the end of the period covered by this report.

In the areas of the country that largely are Christian, there are morning prayers in public schools. All children participate in the assembly but are not punished if they remain silent during prayers.

The Government and some churches frequently disagree over school management when both the Government and the church have a stake in the school. Often churches provide the land and the buildings for the schools, and the Government provides the teachers, which has led to disputes over school management, and sometimes led to the closing of schools.

The Government celebrates several national holidays that also are religious holidays, including Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Idd-ul-Fitr, Idd-ul-Azha, and Diwali.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In May 2001, Muslims protested the reported allocation of a public plot of land to a private developer in Mombassa. The grounds traditionally have been used for celebrating Islamic events. Following the protests, the Government apparently has ceased developing plans to allocate the land, and the land remained public as of the end of the period covered by this report.

The Minister of Trade and Industry Nicholas Biwott has been engaged in a public dispute with the Catholic Church over an intended project to use public land to create an educational facility to be named after the Minister's mother. Father Michael Rop, who is in charge of the local parish where the facility is proposed, protested the appropriation of public land to honor the Minister's mother. The dispute escalated when the Eldoret Bishop, Cornelius Korir, accused the Minister of harassing Father Rop and his supporters, and claimed that the Minister was persecuting the church and its followers. The dispute was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

In April 2001, the High Court allowed the Buru Buru Church of God in Nairobi to reopen. Fighting between rival factions in the Church, which led to numerous injuries among worshipers, had prompted local authorities to block entry to the church on June 25, 2000, in an apparent effort to prevent renewed fighting.

In April 2000, William Ruto, Assistant Minister in the Office of the President, speaking after the discovery of "cult" killings in Uganda, was quoted as saying that the Government would crack down on religious groups that endanger the safety of

their adherents; however, there was no reported harassment of religious groups, and no action was taken by the end of the period covered by this report.

Political parties must register with the Government. Despite 1997 reforms and the subsequent registration of a large number of political parties, the Government has refused to reverse its 1994 denial of registration of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) on the grounds that the IPK had been involved in a number of violent confrontations with police in 1992.

Muslim leaders have charged that the Government is hostile toward Muslims. Muslims complain that non-Muslims receive better treatment when requesting citizenship documents. According to Muslim leaders, government authorities more rigorously scrutinize the identification cards of persons with Muslim surnames and require them to present additional documentation of their citizenship, such as birth certificates of parents and, sometimes, grandparents. The Government has singled out the overwhelmingly Muslim ethnic Somalis as the only group whose members are issued and required to carry an additional form of identification to prove that they are citizens. They must produce upon demand their Kenyan identification card and a second identification card verifying screening. Both cards also are required to apply for a passport. This heightened scrutiny appears to be due to an attempt to deter illegal immigration, rather than to the religious affiliation of the ethnic Somalis. Muslim leaders claim that since the August 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, government discrimination against their community has worsened.

In the past, the misuse of authority by mainly Christian security forces in the northeast, which largely is Muslim and in which banditry is widespread, had contributed to Muslim mistrust. However, during the period covered by this report, there has been greater inclusion of Muslims in security forces and provincial administration; for example, a Muslim was appointed Provincial Commissioner in the Northeast Province.

Practicing witchcraft reportedly is a criminal offense under colonial-era laws; however, persons generally are prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases for which the causes were unknown. The practice of witchcraft is understood widely to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic, but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons. Although many traditional indigenous religions include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it.

In August 1999, the Government presented to Parliament and thereby effectively published the 1994 widely-publicized report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Devil Worship. President Moi appointed the Commission in 1994 in response to public concern about a perceived resurgence of witchcraft, ritual murders, and other ostensibly "Satanic" practices associated with aspects of traditional indigenous religions. The Commission's report included numerous reports of ritual murder, human sacrifice, cannibalism, and feats of magic allegedly done by using powers acquired through such acts. It also reported that "Satanists" had infiltrated non-indigenous religious groups and other organizations, making them "doorways" to Satanism. The Commission is no longer functioning, and the Government took no action to follow up on the report.

In December 1999, a group of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders formed an alternative process to reform the Constitution, the Ufungamano Initiative, which rivaled the Parliament-led process. The Government, although critical of the Ufungamano group, permitted it to proceed with its constitutional review process. In May 2001, after many months of negotiations, the Ufungamano process merged with the parliamentary process. The newly-created Constitutional Review Commission began work during the period covered by this report.

In September 1999, President Moi was quoted as saying that, for political reasons, he would not allow the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, to enter the country.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On March 30, 2001, four armed men carjacked Geoffrey Ngoima Mbugua, a minister at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa's (PCEA) Thika parish and lecturer at St. Paul's Theological Seminary. Police officers pursued the vehicle; when the armed men began shooting at the police, the police shot at the vehicle, killing Mbugua; the perpetrators escaped. No investigation into the case had occurred by the end of the period covered by this report, and it is unlikely that an investigation will be undertaken; the killing was considered to have taken place while the officers' were discharging their duties, and it does not appear that the crime was religiously motivated.

The case of two police officers, Julius Mugambi M'Nabere and Stephan Musau Kilonzo, charged with the August 1999 murder of five Muslim worshippers in the Anas Bin Malik mosque in Chai village near Mombasa remained pending before the court at the end of the period covered by this report.

Although the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, at times the Government used sections of the Public Order Act and the Penal Code to restrict or disrupt public meetings that religious groups organized or participated in, primarily for political reasons. In April 2000, police in Laikipia broke up a gathering in a Catholic church hall on the grounds that the participants were former freedom fighters holding a secret meeting. The police arrested four men and charged them with holding an illegal meeting; the case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

The Government historically has been unsympathetic to tribal religious groups that have engendered protest movements. The Government frequently harassed and periodically arrested and detained members of the Mungiki, a small, controversial, cultural and political movement based in part on Kikuyu ethnic traditions, which espouses political views and cultural practices that are controversial in mainstream Kenyan society. While religion may have played a role in the formation of the group, observers believe that it is not a key characteristic of the group. The Mungiki do not adhere to any single religion and members are free to choose their own religion; the group includes Muslims and Christians. The number of Mungiki members is unknown, but the group draws a significant following from the unemployed and other marginalized segments of society. The debate over the right of the Mungiki to practice their cultural traditions and advance their political agenda is ongoing.

There were no other reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally is a great level of tolerance among religious groups; however, there were a few instances of violence between adherents of different religions, and Muslims perceive themselves to be treated as second-class citizens in a predominantly Christian country. Intermarriage between members of Christian denominations is common, and interfaith prayer services occur frequently. Intermarriage between Muslims and Christians, although less frequent, also is acceptable socially, and mosques and Christian churches can be found on the same city blocks.

For years Muslims and Christians have held an open debate over their respective places in society. Each group claims to have a larger number of adherents than is plausible, and some Muslim groups believe that the Government and business communities deliberately have impeded development in predominantly Muslim areas. Some Muslim leaders claim that discrimination against Muslims has resulted in a greater incidence of poverty among Muslims than among other religious groups; however, there is no statistical evidence to support this claim. At times the debate has undermined mutual trust.

There were a few instances of violence between adherents of different religions. A number of incidents took place in November and December 2000, when a land dispute led to violence between Muslims and Christians in a densely populated neighborhood in Nairobi. At least one person was killed and numerous persons were injured in the riots, including Anglican Archbishop David Gitari. Two days of violent clashes resulted in the burning of several buildings, including a mosque and two churches. After the riots ended, Cabinet Minister Sharrif Nassir admitted that he had encouraged Muslim youths to retaliate when attacked. Muslim leaders apologized for the violence and clarified that the dispute originated over land and was not religiously-motivated. Following the riots, religious leaders on both sides cited police inaction as a reason for the spread of the violence.

In March 2001, Hannah Mungai, a member of the Akorino religious group (a group that mixes traditions based on the Old Testament with indigenous beliefs) left her three children with an evangelist member of the religious group while she toured western areas of the country on a preaching mission. When she returned, the pastor of the religious group returned two of the children; however, he invoked the name of the Holy Spirit and refused to return the youngest child stating that the 2-year-old girl would remain with him to serve at the altar of the church. Mungai did not report the kidnaping to the police because the religious group does not allow challenges to "men of God" once they invoke the name of the Holy Spirit; however,

she later publicized the story after pressure from her husband. Mungai claims that her daughter was given to other religious group members, and she does not know where her daughter is being kept. The matter had not been brought formally to police attention by the end of the period covered by this report.

On August 24, 2000, Father John Anthony Kaiser, a Catholic priest working in the country for over 30 years, was found dead near Naivasha town. Father Kaiser was a vocal human rights activist and a critic of key members of the Government. Although there was much public speculation to the contrary, a U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) report, released in April 2001, concluded that the evidence collected was most consistent with suicide, and that it was unlikely that Father Kaiser had been murdered. The Catholic Church has rejected the FBI report and has called for further independent investigation.

There have been reports of intolerance among refugee groups in Kenya. Somali refugees reportedly have attacked relatives who marry refugees belonging to faiths other than Islam. Somali refugees at the Dadaab camps also reportedly have attacked verbally and physically Sudanese refugee women who wear Westernized clothing considered "too revealing" under Somali standards.

There continued to be reports of ritual murders associated with aspects of traditional indigenous religious rites. The victims, generally teenage children, reportedly were killed and parts of their bodies removed for use in traditional rituals by persons seeking renewed youth or health. The report of the 1994 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Devil Worship, presented to the Parliament in August 1999, contained similar reports from recent years. In September 2000, police in Nairobi reportedly alerted residents to a growing number of ritual murders after a 7-year-old girl was found murdered. A woman was arrested 1 week earlier for allegedly abducting a child.

Occasionally mobs killed members of their communities on suspicion that they practiced witchcraft or were devil worshippers. There were several reports of the public beating "suspicious-looking" persons who were accompanied by small children. On October 3, 2000, a mob of residents of Nairobi's Kariobangi North neighborhood lynched three suspected child abductors (believed to be devil worshippers), including a grandfather who was walking with his grandchild. In late October 2000, in Kisii, police intervened to block villagers from killing seven suspected witches. Also in October 2000, the press reported that villagers burned alive a suspected sorcerer in Kimburini. In another incident, a mob attacked a group of American Missionaries in Kisumu, whom it suspected to be on a mission to abduct children.

There have been societal efforts to bridge religious divides. The Inter-Faith Peace Movement represents a broad religious spectrum, and its members include the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims, the Muslim Consultative Council, the Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, the National Council of Churches of Kenya, the Inland African Church, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, and the Hindu Council. The National Council of Churches in Kenya generally is involved in a variety of civil society initiatives, including conflict resolution.

In December 1999, a group of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders formed an alternative process to reform the Constitution, the Ufungamano Initiative (see Section II). The Initiative, which originally opposed the Parliament-led process, merged with the Government-backed Parliamentary process in March 2001, and the bill that finalized the merger was passed and signed by the President in May 2001.

On November 26, 2000, in Kisumu, progovernment youths forcibly disrupted a meeting of the Ufungamano Initiative. The youths threw homemade bombs, burned a vehicle, and beat several persons severely. Police did not intervene.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy made a concerted effort to bridge the gaps that exist between Muslims and Christians. Embassy officials maintain regular contact with leaders and members of all religious communities. The Ambassador and other embassy officers met with Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim leaders while traveling. The Ambassador regularly hosts meetings with religious leaders to discuss issues affecting their communities. In May 2001, the Ambassador and senior embassy officers traveled to Mombasa to host a public forum at which members of the predominantly Muslim coastal community could meet embassy officials and gain a better understanding of U.S. policy and activities. While in Mombasa, the Ambassador also met with Christian leaders to listen to their concerns and to explain U.S. policies and programs. The Ambassador used the occasion to explain personally the conclusions of the April 2001 FBI report on the death of Father John Kaiser.

LESOTHO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 11,720 square miles and its population is 2,143,141. Christianity, specifically Roman Catholicism, is the dominant religion. Approximately 90 percent of the population are Christian, and 70 percent of Christians are Catholic. Muslims, members of other non-Christian religions, and atheists constitute the remaining 10 percent. Christians are scattered throughout the country, while Muslims live mainly in the northeastern part of the country. Most practitioners of Islam are of Asian origin, while the majority of Christians are the indigenous Basotho.

Many devout Christians still practice their traditional cultural beliefs and rituals along with Christianity. The Catholic Church has fused some aspects of local culture into its services. For example, the singing of hymns during services has developed into a local and traditional way of singing (a repetitive call and response style) in Sesotho—the indigenous language—as well as English. In addition priests are seen dressed in local dress during services.

There are three main missionary groups, all of which are Christian, active in the country: Catholics, Protestants, and Anglicans.

Catholic predominance in the country derives from the successful establishment of Catholic schools in the last century and their influence over education policy. The Catholic Church owns about 75 percent of all primary and secondary schools in the country and was instrumental in establishing the National University.

The Catholic Church helped found the Basotholand National Party (BNP) in 1959 and sponsored it in the independence elections in 1966. Most members of the BNP are practicing Catholics. The BNP ruled the country from independence in 1966 until 1985 when it was overthrown in a military coup. The then-opposition Basotholand Congress Party (BCP) historically has been aligned with the Protestants or evangelicals specifically. They were forced into exile in 1973 after being denied their victory in the 1970 elections.

The members of the BCP, who have remained Protestant, won all 65 seats in the National Assembly when elections were held again in 1993.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no state religion, and no evidence that the Government favors any particular religion. However, the majority, if not all, members of the Government are Christians.

The Government does not establish requirements for religious recognition. Generally the Government does not provide benefits to any religious groups; however, Christian groups enjoy a waiver of taxes on donations from outside the country. These donations (in the form of clothes, medicines, food, etc.) are not subjected to import taxation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally is mutual understanding and cooperation between Christians and Muslims. There are efforts within the ecumenical community to promote tolerance and cooperation on social issues. Although there were some tensions between Christians and Muslims in previous years, there were no reports of such tensions during the period covered by this report.

There are serious theological and doctrinal differences among the Christians. The main feud is between the Catholics and the Protestants, especially evangelical, charismatic, and Mormon groups. However, there have been no specific incidents or confrontations during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

LIBERIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Islamic leaders continued to complain of government discrimination against Muslims.

Societal discrimination against Muslims continued to be a problem. Ethnic tensions along religious lines between Muslim and non-Muslim groups also continued to be a problem, particularly between the Lormas and the Mandingos.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 43,000 square miles and its population is 3,164,156. As much as 40 percent of the population practice either Christianity or elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions. Approximately 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively. Approximately 20 percent of the population practice Islam, although Islam continued to gain adherents. The Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and AME Zion denominations, as well as several Pentecostal churches are represented in the Christian community. Some of the Pentecostal movements are independent, while others are affiliated with churches outside the country. There also is a small Baha'i community.

Christianity, traditional indigenous religions, and syncretistic religions combining elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions are found throughout the country. Islam is prevalent only among members of the Mandingo ethnic group, who are concentrated in the northern and eastern counties, and among the Vai ethnic group in the northwest.

Foreign missionary groups in the country include Baptists, Catholics, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions. There is no established state religion. However, government ceremonies invariably open and close with prayer and may include the singing of hymns. The prayers and hymns usually are Christian but occasionally are Muslim.

All organizations, including religious groups, must register their articles of incorporation with the Government, along with a statement of the purpose of the organization; however, traditional indigenous religious groups are not required to register, and generally do not register. Registration is routine, and there have been no re-

ports that the registration process is burdensome or discriminatory in its administration.

In March 2001, President Taylor sponsored the travel of more than 100 pilgrims to Mecca. Some non-Muslims criticized this action as a waste of scarce resources (see Section III).

Two FM radio stations, one operated by the Roman Catholic archdiocese, the other an evangelical station, broadcast Christian-oriented religious programming from Monrovia to the capital and the surrounding area. There are no Islamic-oriented radio stations in the country due to the lack of financial resources in the northern and eastern counties, where the Islamic population is concentrated.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although the law prohibits religious discrimination, Islamic leaders complained of government discrimination against Muslims. Although there are some Muslims in senior government positions, many Muslims believe that they are bypassed for desirable jobs. Many Muslim business proprietors believe that the Government's decision to enforce an old statute prohibiting business on Sunday discriminates against them. Most Mandingos, and hence most Muslims, were allied with factions that opposed Taylor during the recent civil war and still belong to opposition parties.

In March 2001, the Government moved to shut down the short-wave broadcasts of Radio Veritas, citing "illegal operation." Radio Veritas is operated by the Catholic archdiocese, and the Government briefly had suspended its operations in March 2000. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications claimed that Radio Veritas applied for and was refused a short-wave license, while the management of Radio Veritas claimed to have documents from the Ministry that granted the station a short-wave license. Radio Veritas continued to broadcast on the FM band throughout the period covered by this report.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Government forces have been accused of serious human rights abuses against suspected rebels and sympathizers in fighting in Lofa County during the period covered by this report. The Government contends that the insurgents largely are Mandingo Muslims of the ULIMO-K faction that fought against President Charles Taylor's forces during the civil war.

In February 2000, a Muslim activist was ordered arrested on charges of treason after he called on Muslims to quit their government jobs in protest of the Government's inaction since the burning of five mosques in Lofa County in January 2000. The activist went into hiding and later fled the country. The Government has not taken actions openly against Muslims in Lofa county; however, its inaction over reports of abuses in Lofa County contributed to ethnic tension between Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic groups in that area of the country.

By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not released a report following its November 1999 investigation of the reported killing of as many as 30 Mandingos in Lofa County in August 1999. Although the authorities subsequently arrested 19 persons, they did not charge anyone with a crime. Mandingo residents of Lofa County continued to be afraid to return to their homes.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Some tensions exist between the major religious communities. The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, Islamic leaders complained of societal discrimination against Muslims. The private sector in urban areas, particularly in the capital, gives preference to Christianity in civic ceremonies and observances, and discrimination against followers of other organized religions reaches into areas of individual opportunity and employment.

In October 2000 in Nimba County, a property dispute between Mandingos and members of the Mano and Gio ethnic groups led to rioting that reportedly killed four persons. A mosque and five other buildings were burned. Police arrested 12 persons in connection with this violence and charged them with arson; however, they had not been brought to trial by the end of the period covered by this report.

Ethnic tensions continued in Lofa County between the predominantly Muslim Mandingo ethnic group and the Lorma ethnic group. By the end of the period cov-

ered by this report, the Government had not yet released a report on the burning of five mosques in Lofa County in January 2000.

Ritual killings, in which body parts used in traditional indigenous rituals are removed from the victim, continued to occur. The number of such killings is difficult to ascertain, since police often describe deaths as accidents even when body parts have been removed. Deaths that appear to be natural or accidental sometimes are rumored to be the work of ritual killers. Little reliable information is readily available about traditions associated with ritual killings. It is believed that practitioners of traditional indigenous religions among the Grebo and Krahn ethnic groups concentrated in the southeastern counties most commonly engage in ritual killings. The victims usually are members of the religious group performing the ritual. Body parts of a member whom the group believes to be powerful are believed to be the most effective ritually. Body parts most frequently removed include the heart, liver, and genitals. The rituals involved have been reported in some cases to entail eating body parts, and the underlying religious beliefs may be related to incidents during the civil war in which faction leaders sometimes ate (and in which one faction leader had himself filmed eating) body parts of former leaders of rival factions. Removal of body parts for use in traditional rituals is believed to be the motive for ritual killings, rather than an abuse incidental to killings committed for other motives. Ritual murders for the purpose of obtaining body parts traditionally were committed by religious group members called "heart men;" however, since the civil war, common criminals inured to killing also may sell body parts. In August 1999, the Government sent a high-level delegation of the National Police to the southeastern counties to investigate reports of ritual killings. There were no reports released from this investigation.

There is an interfaith council that brings together leaders of the Christian and Islamic faiths.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy monitors developments affecting religious freedom, maintains contact with clergy and other leaders of major religious communities, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officers have met on various occasions with the Roman Catholic Archbishop, the United Methodist Bishop, the AME Bishop, the AME Zion Bishop, the Interfaith Council, the National Repentant Muslims, and other religious leaders during the period covered by this report.

MADAGASCAR

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 226,657 square miles and its population is 15,506,472. Most of the population is nominally Christian, of which an estimated 4.5 million are Roman Catholics, 3.5 million are Protestants belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (mostly from Fianarantsoa North), 2 million are Lutherans (mostly from Fianarantsoa South), and less than 1 million are Anglicans (mostly in Antananarivo and Toamasina). Most other citizens are followers of traditional indigenous religions centered on ancestor worship. Although there are no exact figures, Muslims constitute slightly less than an estimated 10 percent of the population (concentrated in the north and northwest); they include ethnic Malagasy as well as most of the ethnic Indians who immigrated within the past 100 years. There are a few Hindus among the Indians.

Foreign missionary groups are active in the country, including Catholics, Protestants of various denominations, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Religious groups must register and obtain authorization from the Ministry of Interior.

Mainline denominations are organized in the Council of Christian Churches of Madagascar. This group regularly expresses political and economic concerns as well as religious concerns. Severely destabilized by its involvement as a mediator in the political conflict that brought about the Third Republic Council in 1993, the council withdrew from the political scene for several years. In 2000 the council, as part of its commitment to justice, engaged its member churches in the monitoring of elections. Despite the political nature of these activities, there have been no reports of governmental threats or mistreatment of church leaders.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely in the country. Several church-related organizations, some with international affiliations, operate freely in health and social services, development projects, schools, and higher education.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Numerous independent evangelical groups operate freely in all regions of the country, some using their own local media facilities; however, since January 2001, the local branch of the Kimbanguist church, whose membership is less than 5,000, has been prevented from broadcasting its religious service on the government-controlled Radio Madagascar. This restriction appears to be politically motivated, and apparently is based on the pastor's support for the leader of an opposition party and the political, rather than religious, content of his broadcasts.

In January 1998, an organization widely perceived to be affiliated with the Reverend Sun Myung Moon was refused registration, apparently due to concerns about its use of mind-control practices. There is no indication that the organization has reapplied for registration, nor that the Government has changed its decision.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

A Protestant missionary whose family name is Moon was subjected to government harassment due to confusion surrounding his possible connection to the Moon organization. While he was extending his visa and labor certification, officials of the Malagasy Ministry of Labor allegedly called him in and accused him of being part of the Unification Church, whose members previously had been denied visas. He was not denied a visa.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious communities generally are amicable. There is some ethnic Malagasy resentment of the ethnic Indian community, but this primarily is due to perceptions that the relative prosperity of the ethnic Indian community is due to the corruption of government officials and the economic exploitation of ethnic Malagasy customers.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

MALAWI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 45,745 square miles and its population is estimated at 10,385,849. More than 70 percent of the population are Christian. Among the Christian denominations, the largest are the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian—CCAP) Churches, with smaller numbers of Anglicans, Baptists, evangelicals, and Seventh-Day Adventists. There is a substantial Muslim minority totaling approximately 20 percent of the population. Most Muslims are Sunni Muslim. There also are Hindus, Baha'is, and followers of traditional indigenous religions. There are few atheists.

Foreign missionary groups are present in the country, including Protestant Christian, Catholic, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

There are no separate requirements for the recognition of religions, but religious groups must register with the Government. There were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious groups.

Foreign missionaries experienced occasional delays in renewing employment permits, despite the Government's revision of its policy and procedures on temporary employment permits in 1997; however, this appeared to be the result of bureaucratic inefficiency rather than a deliberate government policy against foreign missionaries. Missionaries and charitable workers pay lower fees for employment permits than do other professionals.

In May 2001, the Government released a formal response to a series of pastoral letters from the CCAP churches affirming the churches' right to comment on issues of public concern and invited religious leaders to Lilongwe, the capital, to discuss national issues (see Section III).

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities. There is no societal discrimination against members of religious minorities.

Some opposition politicians and clerics have raised Islam as a political issue. Citing the President's adherence to Islam, his contact with Islamic countries such as Libya and Sudan, and the building of new mosques, some opposition politicians and clerics have accused the ruling party of attempting to "Islamicize" the country. An attempt by the Government in early 2000 to replace "bible knowledge" in the school curriculum with the more universal "moral and religious education" course has met with widespread criticism from Christian leaders. In February 2000 when the President suspended the introduction of the new curriculum and returned "bible knowledge" to the curriculum, Muslim leaders rebuked him.

There have been active efforts to foster cooperation between religious groups. For example, the Public Affairs Committee, which is involved prominently in promoting civic education and human rights, includes representatives of various churches and mosques.

In March and April 2001, the CCAP churches released pastoral letters addressing social and political topics of current national interest. The Presbyterian letter in

particular was direct and critical of the Government. While some pro-government newspapers attacked individual members of the clergy, the President publicly affirmed the churches' right to comment on issues of public concern (see Section II). While the pastoral letters created some political tension, there is a continued acceptance of the historical role played by religious organizations in social and political life.

In an isolated incident in April 2000, Muslims and Christians clashed over the efforts of an evangelical preacher to promote an audiotape comparing the Bible and the Koran. Muslims found the tape provocative and blasphemous, and the issue remained an open point of contention between followers of the two religions; however, there were no further actions by either side on this issue during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Representatives of the Embassy have frequent contact with leaders and members of all religious communities in the country.

MALI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to the religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 471,045 square miles, and its population is 10,951,176. Muslims make up approximately 90 percent of the population, and the vast majority of Muslims are Sunni. About 5 percent of the population are Christian, and the Christian community is almost evenly split between Catholic and Protestant denominations. Most of the remainder of the population practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Atheism and agnosticism are rare. Most immigrants are from neighboring countries and either practice the majority Muslim faith or belong to a Christian group. The vast majority of citizens practice their religion daily.

There are no geographic concentrations or segregation of religious groups. Christian communities, which tend to be located in and around urban areas, are found throughout the country, but more often in the southern regions. Groups that practice traditional indigenous religions are located throughout the country but are most active in rural areas.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country; most known foreign missionary groups are Christian groups that are based in Europe and engaged in development work, primarily the provision of health care. A number of U.S.-based Christian missionary groups also operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion; the Constitution defines the country as a secular state and allows for religious practices that do not pose a threat to social stability and peace.

The Government requires that all public associations, including religious associations, register with the Government. However, registration confers no tax preference and no other legal benefits, and failure to register is not penalized in practice. The

registration process is routine and is not burdensome. Traditional indigenous religions are not required to register.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country without government interference. They do not link the benefits of their development activities to conversion. Muslims and non-Muslims may proselytize freely.

Family law, including laws surrounding divorce, marriage, and inheritance, are based on a mixture of local tradition and Islamic law and practice.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

The Minister of Territorial Administration and Collectives can prohibit religious publications that he concludes defame another religion; however, there were no reports during the period covered by this report of instances in which publications were prohibited.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the Muslim majority and the Christian and other religious minorities—including practitioners of traditional indigenous religions—are generally amicable. Adherents of a variety of faiths may be found within the same families. Many followers of one religion attend religious ceremonies of other religions, especially weddings and funerals.

Non-Muslim missionary communities live and work in the country without difficulty. Christian missionaries, especially the rural-based development workers, enjoy good relations within their communities.

Islam as practiced in the country is tolerant and adapted to local conditions. Women participate in economic and political activity, engage in social interaction, and do not wear veils.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting of human rights. Embassy officers meet regularly with religious authorities and government officials in ministries dealing with these issues. During the period covered by this report, the Ambassador began an outreach program to the Islamic and Christian communities. The U.S. Embassy maintains contacts with the foreign missionary community, and monitors the situation for indications that religious freedom may be threatened by the Government or societal pressures. Embassy officers have raised the issue of religious freedom through public diplomacy programs.

MAURITANIA

The Constitution establishes Mauritania as an Islamic republic and decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the State; the Government limits freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of the respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. While the Constitution decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the state, Christians in the foreign community and the few Christian citizens practice their religion openly and freely. However, proselytizing is prohibited, and distribution of religious materials is prohibited.

Relations between the Muslim community and the small Christian community generally are amicable.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 397,840 square miles, and its population is approximately 2.5 million. Virtually 100 percent of the population are practicing

Sunni Muslims. There is a small number of Christians, and Christian churches have been established in Nouakchott, Atar, Zouerate, Nouadhibou, and Rosso.

There are several foreign Christian nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) active in humanitarian and developmental work in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution establishes Mauritania as an Islamic republic and decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the State; accordingly, the Government limits freedom of religion. However, Christians in the foreign community and the few Christian citizens practice their religion openly and freely.

Both the Government and society generally consider Islam to be the essential cohesive element unifying the country's various ethnic groups and castes. There is a cabinet-level Ministry of Culture and Islamic Orientation and a High Council of Islam consisting of six imams which, at the Government's request, advises on the conformance of legislation to Islamic precepts.

Although the Government provides a small stipend to the imam of the Central Mosque in the capital city of Nouakchott, mosques and Koranic schools normally are supported by their members and other donors.

The Government does not register religious groups; however, secular NGO's must register with the Ministry of the Interior; this includes humanitarian and development NGO's affiliated with religious groups. Nonprofit organizations, including both religious groups and secular NGO's, generally are not subject to taxation.

The judiciary consists of a single system of courts with a modernized legal system that conforms with the principles of Shari'a (Islamic law).

A magistrate of Shari'a, who heads a separate government commission, decides the dates for observing religious holidays and addresses the nation on these holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Shari'a (Islamic law), proclaimed the law of the land under a previous government in 1983, includes the Koranic prohibition against apostasy or conversion to a religion other than Islam; however, it has never been codified in civil law or enforced. The small number of known converts from Islam have suffered no social ostracism, and there have been no reports of societal or governmental attempts to punish them.

Although there is no specific legal prohibition against proselytizing by non-Muslims, in practice the Government prohibits proselytizing by non-Muslims through the use of Article 11 of the Press Act, which bans the publication of any material that is against Islam or contradicts or otherwise threatens Islam; however, there were no reports of the Government punishing persons for violating Article 11 during the period covered by this report. The Government views any attempts by Christians to convert Muslims as undermining society. Foreign Christian NGO's limit their activities to humanitarian and development assistance.

Under Article 11 of the Press Law, the Government may restrict the importation, printing, or public distribution of Bibles or other non-Islamic religious literature, and in practice Bibles are neither printed nor publicly sold in the country. However, the possession of Bibles and other Christian religious materials in private homes is not illegal, and Bibles and other religious publications are available among the small Christian community.

There is no religious oath required of government employees or members of the ruling political party, except for the President and the members of the 5-person Constitutional Council and the 10-person High Council of Magistrates presided over by the President. The Constitutional Council and the High Council of Magistrates advise the President in matters of law and the Constitution. The oath of office includes a promise to God to uphold the law of the land in conformity with Islamic precepts.

Both privately run Koranic schools, which nearly all children attend, and the public schools include classes on religion. These classes teach the history and principles of Islam and the classical Arabic of the Koran. Although attendance of these religion classes ostensibly is required, many students, the great majority of whom are Muslims, decline to attend these classes for diverse ethno-linguistic and religious reasons. Nevertheless these students are able to advance in school and graduate with diplomas, provided that they compensate for their failure to attend the required religion classes by their performance in other classes.

Shari'a Islamic law provides the legal principles upon which the law and legal procedure are based, and because of the manner in which Shari'a is implemented

in the country, courts do not in all cases treat women as the equals of men. For example, the testimony of two women is necessary to equal that of one man. In addition, in awarding an indemnity to the family of a woman who has been killed, the courts grant only half the amount that they would award for a man's death. For commercial and other modern issues not specifically addressed by Shari'a, the law and courts treat women and men equally.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the Muslim community and the small Christian community generally are amicable. There were no incidents of attacks or threats of attacks on the basis of religion during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy monitors developments affecting religious freedom, maintains contact with clergy and other leaders of major religious groups, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, including the Minister of Culture and Islamic Orientation, in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

On May 14, 2001, the Ambassador discussed religious diversity and freedom of religious practices with the Minister of Culture and Islamic Orientation. During the period covered by this report, a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) grant was given to a local NGO to support the training of imams in the national campaign against HIV/AIDS.

The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission have discussed issues of religious freedom with representatives of American Christian NGO's working in country.

MAURITIUS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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.

Tensions between the Hindu majority and Christian, Creole, and Muslim minorities persist; however, members of each group worshipped without hindrance.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 718 square miles and its population is more than 1 million. In the 2000 census, approximately 50 percent of the population claimed to be Hindu, 32 percent Christian, and 16 percent Muslim. Less than 1 percent claimed to be Buddhist, another faith, atheist, or agnostic. There are no figures for those who actually practice their faith, but there are estimates that the figure is around 60 percent for all religious groups.

Approximately 85 percent of Christians are Roman Catholic. The remaining 15 percent are members of the following churches: Adventist, Assembly of God, Christian Tamil, Church of England, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Sunni Muslims account for over 90 percent of Muslims; however, there are some Shi'a Muslims. Many Buddhists also are practicing Catholics, since many citizens of Chinese ancestry have sent, and continue to send, their children to the Loreto Convent primary schools located in the major towns.

The north tends to be more Hindu and the south is more Catholic. There also are large populations of Hindus and Catholics in the main cities from the capital of Port Louis to the central cities of Quatre Bornes and Curepipe, and most Muslims and

Christian churches are concentrated in these areas. The offshore island of Rodrigues, with a population of 35,200, predominantly is Catholic.

There are foreign missionary groups active in the country, including the Baptist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The country is a small island nation, and ethnic groups, known as “communities,” are tightly knit. Inter-marriage is relatively rare. An individual’s name easily identifies his or her ethnic and religious background. There is a strong correlation between religious affiliation and ethnicity. Citizens of Indian ethnicity usually are Hindus or Muslims. Citizens of Chinese ancestry usually practice both Buddhism and Catholicism. Creoles and citizens of European descent usually are Catholic; however, there is a growing number of Hindu converts to evangelical Christian churches, a fact that is of growing concern to Hindu organizations.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Religious organizations and faiths that were present in the country prior to independence, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church, the Seventh-Day Adventists, Hindus, and Muslims, are recognized in a parliamentary decree. These groups also receive a lump-sum payment every year from the Ministry of Finance based upon the number of adherents, as determined by a 10-year census. Newer religious organizations (which must have a minimum of 7 members) are registered by the Registrar of Associations and are recognized as a legal entities with tax-free privileges. No groups are known to have been refused registration.

Foreign missionary groups are allowed to operate on a case-by-case basis. There are no government regulations detailing the conditions of their presence or limiting their proselytizing activities. Groups must obtain both a visa and a work permit for each missionary.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

While the Government is secular in both name and practice, for political reasons in the past it has favored the Hindu majority of the population with greater access to government patronage; however, there were no reports that this continued in practice.

Some minorities, usually Creoles and Muslims, allege that a glass ceiling exists within the upper echelons of the civil service that prevents them from reaching the highest levels; however, citizens with a Hindu background predominate in the upper echelons of the civil service.

While some Creole political groups alleged that Christian Creoles received unjust treatment from the police, there was no evidence that this was based on religious differences in particular. Observers believe that such incidents likely are a result largely of the Creoles’ position as the country’s underclass, as well as ethnic differences, since the police force predominantly is Indo-Mauritian. Tensions between Creoles and police were ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

Foreign missionaries sometimes are prohibited from residing in the country beyond 5 years (which would permit them to seek Mauritian citizenship), but religious organizations are permitted to send new missionaries to replace them.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Tensions between the Hindu majority and Christian, Creole, and Muslim minorities persist; however, no violent confrontations resulted during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Support for some conflict resolution activities was provided under the U.S. Democracy and Human Rights Fund.

MOZAMBIQUE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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; however, the Constitution bans religious denomination-based political parties as threats to national unity.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 308,642 square miles and its population is approximately 17 million. According to the National Institute of Statistics, half of the population does not profess to practice a religion or creed; however, scholars at local universities assert that virtually all persons recognize or practice some form of traditional indigenous religions. Of the approximately 8 million persons who do profess a recognized religion, 24 percent are Roman Catholic, 22 percent are Protestant, and 20 percent are Muslim. Many Muslim clerics disagree with this statistic, claiming that Islam is the country's majority religion.

Religious communities are dispersed throughout the country. The northern provinces and the coastal strip are most strongly Muslim, Catholics predominate in the central provinces, and Protestants are most numerous in the southern region. Government sources note that evangelical Christians represent the fastest growing religious group, with the number of young adherents under age 35 increasing rapidly.

There are 394 distinct denominations of religions registered with the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. Among Muslims only a generic "Islamic" community (Sunni) and the Ismaili community are registered. Among Christians, the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Greek Orthodox Churches are registered along with Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Seventh-Day Adventist, Mormon, Nazarene, and Jehovah's Witnesses groups, as well as many evangelical, apostolic, and Pentecostal churches. The Zion Christian Church, the largest of the African Independent Churches in Mozambique, also has a large number of adherents. Jewish, Hindu, and Baha'i communities also are registered and constitute small minorities. Religious communities tend to draw members from across ethnic, political, economic, and racial lines.

Traditional indigenous practices and rituals are present in most Christian churches, including Catholic churches, and in most Muslim worship. For example, members of these faiths commonly travel to the graves of ancestors to say special prayers for rain. Similarly Christians and Muslims continue to practice a ritual of preparation or inauguration at the time of important events (e.g. a first job, a school examination, a swearing-in, etc.), by offering prayers and spilling beverages on the ground to please ancestors. Some Christians and Muslims consult "curandeiros," traditional healers or spiritualists—some of whom are themselves nominal Christians or Muslims—in search of good luck, healing, and solutions to problems.

Dozens of foreign missionary and evangelical groups operate freely in the country, representing numerous Protestant denominations along with the Summer Institute of Languages Bible Translators and the Tabligh Islamic Call Mission. Muslim missionaries from South Africa have established Islamic schools (madrassas) in many cities and towns of the northern provinces.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides that all citizens have the freedom to practice or not to practice a religion and gives religious denominations the right to pursue their reli-

gious aims freely, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The 1989 Law on Religious Freedom requires religious institutions and missionary organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice, reveal their principal source of funds, and provide the names of at least 500 followers in good standing. No particular benefits or privileges are associated with the registration process, and there were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious group during the period covered by this report. The Christian Council reports that not all religious groups register, but unregistered groups worship unhindered by the Government.

The Government does not favor a particular religion, nor is there a state or dominant religion. There are no national holidays that are religious in nature, but the Government has a liberal leave policy to permit religious observance.

The Government routinely grants visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries. Like all foreigners residing in the country, missionaries face a somewhat burdensome process in gaining legal residency; however, they carry out activities without government interference throughout the country.

The Constitution gives religious groups the right to own and acquire assets, and these institutions are allowed by law to own and operate schools. There are increasing numbers of religious schools in operation; for example, in November 2000, the Islamic community began construction of a primary and secondary school for 1,000 students in Maputo and has established a small college in Nampula. The Catholic University has educational facilities in Maputo, Beira, Nampula, and Cuamba. Religious instruction in public schools is prohibited strictly.

A conference of bishops, including Catholic and Anglican members, meets regularly and consults with the President of the Republic.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The law governing political parties specifically forbids religious parties from organizing, and any party from sponsoring religious propaganda. In late 1998, the Independent Party of Mozambique (PIMO), a predominantly Muslim group without representation in Parliament, began arguing for the right of political parties to base their activities on religious principles. The Government has tolerated PIMO's activities, although it has criticized the group. PIMO and some members of the legislature argued that the Movimento Islamico, a parliamentary caucus of Muslims from the ruling Frelimo party, was tantamount to a religious party.

Most places of worship nationalized by the State in 1977 have been returned to the respective religious organizations; however, the Catholic Church and certain Muslim communities maintain that some properties such as schools, clinics, and private residences remain in state hands. The issue of restitution is complex, because some of these buildings are being used for government-administered schools and clinics, and the final responsibility for establishing a process for property restitution rests with provincial governments. In April 1999, an independent newsletter claimed that the State had not returned Catholic schools and seminary property in Inhambane, Maputo, Niassa, and Zambezia provinces. The Islamic community continued with its efforts to reclaim properties held by the State in Ressano Garcia, Inhambane, Beira, Nacala, and Pemba. These complaints and government decisions are debated periodically, although the churches have not asked for the return of the property in order to avoid depriving the local population of access to social services. The return of property increasingly appears to involve negotiation or collaboration, rather than recourse to the judicial system; for example, there is a state-administered school on Catholic Church property.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

In January 2000, the Supreme Court acquitted an imam who was arrested in 1999 in connection with a murder; in July 2000, the court found 2 other men guilty of the murder and sentenced them to 9 and 16 years' imprisonment.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among communities of different faiths generally are amicable, especially at the grassroots level. The black and Indian Islamic communities tend to remain separate; however, there were no reports of conflict.

The 4-year-old Forum of Religions, an organization for social and disaster relief composed of members of the Christian Council of Mozambique, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Muslim, Baha'i, and Jewish communities is an example of inter-faith cooperation. The goal of the forum is to offer collective assistance to the needy, without regard to creed. During the floods of early 2000 and 2001, numerous religious communities jointly contributed to flood relief efforts.

In November 2000, various religious and civic society organizations, such as the League of Human Rights, the Islamic Council, the Christian Council, and the Bar Association formed a Civil Society Commission. The body investigated the deaths from asphyxiation of approximately 100 prisoners in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado. However, a prominent Maputo imam noted that the Islamic community often is left out of this type of social and political dialog.

The Catholic Church played a leading role in brokering the 1992 Rome Peace Accords between the Frelimo Government and Renamo opposition coalition. Since that time, it has continued to encourage the evolution of the political system. The Catholic Church and Caritas International, citing the country's successful transition from war to "peaceful communal living," hosted a conference in August 2000 in Maputo on peace and justice. During the period covered by this report, the Catholic Church published pastoral letters encouraging the faltering dialog between Frelimo and Renamo; strongly criticizing the November 2000 deaths of approximately 100 prisoners in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado; and criticizing a rise in criminality and corruption, including the November 2000 killing of renowned journalist Carlos Cardoso.

In early 2000, civil society and the media highlighted religious aspects of draft Family Law legislation. Debate focused on the need for legal recognition of religious and common law marriages, as only civil marriages are legal at present. Under the proposed law, polygamous marriages would not be recognized, although the law would offer protection to the widows and children of polygamous unions. Several leaders within the Islamic community oppose the proposal for not recognizing polygamy. On the other hand, approximately 50 Muslim women staged a public protest against polygamy in early May 2000. Some Islamic groups oppose a section of the law that would raise the legal age of marriage to 16 years of age for both men and women. However, several Christian religious groups have proposed higher minimum ages for marriage, such as 18 or even 20 years of age.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Government actions in support of religious freedom have involved a variety of demarches on human rights matters to the Government. The Ambassador and embassy officials also held several meetings with representatives of religious-based nongovernmental organizations, largely in connection with flood relief efforts, as well as with several American missionaries.

NAMIBIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 318,252 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.8 million. A vast majority of citizens—over 90 percent—identify themselves as Christian. The two largest denominations are the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches, although there also are smaller numbers of Baptists, Methodists, and Mormons. The Himba, an ethnic group that constitutes less than 1 percent of the population, practice a traditional indigenous religion oriented toward their natural environment in the desert northwest. The San people (also known as bushmen), who constitute less than 3 percent of the population, also practice a traditional in-

digenous religion. Other non-Christian denominations include the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Baha'i faiths. Practitioners of these religions predominantly are immigrants, descendants of immigrants, or converted after recent proselytizing. They reside primarily in urban areas. There are few atheists in the country.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Mormon, and Baha'i missionaries.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion, nor does the Government subsidize any particular denomination.

The Government does not recognize any religion formally. There are no registration requirements for religious organizations.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

Some foreign missionaries have complained about the difficulty of obtaining work and residency permits; however, religious workers are subject to the same bureaucratic impediments in obtaining work and residency permits that face all foreign citizens.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the many religious communities are amicable.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy has engaged the Government on a number of occasions in regards to revising its policy on granting residence and work permits for foreign nationals, including both religious and lay workers. Embassy staff members have frequent contact with citizens and foreign visitors from a wide variety of religious faiths.

NIGER

The Constitution provides for "the right of the free development of each individual in their spiritual, cultural, and religious dimensions," and the Government generally respects the freedom to practice one's religious beliefs, as long as persons respect public order, social peace, and national unity.

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.

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, there were instances when members of the Islamic majority were not tolerant of the rights of members of minority religions to practice their faith. For example, in November 2000 riots led by Islamic fundamentalists, rioters targeted two Christian missionary sites.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 489,076 square miles and its population is approximately 11,200,000. Islam is the dominant religion and is practiced by over 90 percent of the population. There also are small practicing communities of Chris-

tians (including Jehovah's Witnesses) and Baha'is. Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, account for less than 5 percent of the population but are active particularly in Niamey and other urban centers with expatriate populations. As Christianity was the religion of French colonial institutions, its followers include many local believers from the educated, the elite, and colonial families, as well as Africans from neighboring coastal countries, particularly Benin, Togo, and Ghana. Numbering only a few thousand, the Baha'is are located primarily in Niamey and in communities on the west side of the Niger River, bordering Burkina Faso. A small percentage of the population practice traditional indigenous religions. There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country.

Active Christian missionary organizations include Southern Baptist, Evangelical Baptist, Catholic, Assemblies of God, Seventh-Day Adventist, Serving in Mission (SIM), and Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for "the right of the free development of each individual in their spiritual, cultural, and religious dimensions," and the Government generally respects the freedom to practice one's religious beliefs, as long as persons respect public order, social peace, and national unity.

Religious organizations must register with the Interior Ministry. This registration is a formality, and there is no evidence that the Government has ever refused to register a religious organization. The Government must authorize construction of any place of worship; however, there were no reports that the Government refused such construction during the period covered by this report.

Foreign missionaries work freely, but their organizations must be registered officially as associations. In addition to proselytizing, most missionary groups generally offer development or humanitarian assistance. The Christian community in Galmi, Tahoua Department, houses a hospital and health center run by SIM missionaries. The hospital and health center have been in operation for over 40 years.

Christmas, Easter, and Muslim holy days are recognized as national holidays.

No religious group is subsidized, although the Islamic Association has a weekly broadcast on the government television station. Christian programming generally is broadcast only on special occasions, such as Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In reaction to rioting by Islamic fundamentalist groups in November 2000 (see Section III), the Government banned six fundamentalist-oriented organizations. The Government justified the ban on the grounds that these organizations were responsible for "disturbing the peace." No mainstream Islamist organizations or human rights organizations have challenged the legality of the bans, which were still in effect at the end of the period covered by this report.

In early 2000, the Government requested that the Nigerian affiliated evangelical Abundant Life Church suspend its radio broadcasts for several months in order to ease tensions with local Islamic fundamentalists. The church complied, but resumed broadcasting several months later.

Starting in 1998, Southern Baptist missionaries in Say (30 miles south of Niamey) faced harassment by members of the majority Islamic community. Upon notifying authorities, the missionaries were told that, while it was within their rights to be there, the local police could not ensure their safety. The problem continued through September 1999, when the missionaries decided to move away. One family has relocated to Gotherye (north of Niamey) and the other family continued its missionary activities in the region but no longer lives in Say. In May 2000, the same Islamic activists in Say threatened to burn down the meeting place of the local Christians who remained and beat or have arrested a local Christian man in the village of Ouro Sidi who continued to work with the Southern Baptists. There were no reports that such threats were ever carried out during the period covered by this report.

Just after the April 1999 coup, the Assemblies of God church in the capital, Niamey, was notified by the mayor's office that it had to close until the "new order" was established; however, the Assemblies of God church remained open, and no further action was ever taken on the case.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities, but there have been instances when members of the Islamic majority were not tolerant of the rights of members of minority religions to practice their faith. The cities of Say, Kiota, Agadez, and Madarounfa are considered holy by the local Islamic communities, and the practice of other religions in those cities is not as well tolerated as in other areas.

In November 2000, several Islamist groups demonstrated in Niamey and Maradi, 400 miles east of the capital, to protest a high fashion show being held near Niamey. The demonstrations turned violent, and protesters targeted bars, purported prostitutes, and legal betting kiosks. In addition, on November 9, as Maradi police were preparing to meet with Islamic fundamentalists, traditional leaders, and local officials to defuse the situation, mobs led by Islamic fundamentalists attacked the Abundant Life Church and the nearby compound of SIM, an American missionary group active in the country for over 70 years. The police responded haphazardly and both facilities suffered extensive damage in the attacks. The police arrested 100 persons in connection with the violence in Maradi and banned 6 Islamic groups (see Section II). Although most youths that were arrested were released quickly without charge, approximately 30 men, including the marabout, awaited trial on charges of inciting riots, destruction of property, and looting at the end of the period covered by this report.

In November 2000, the country's most important human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO), the Association Nigerien de Defense de Droit de L'Homme (ANDDH), strongly criticized religious intolerance and violence. In addition, the Imam of Zinder, a city which experienced similar problems in 1999 (but which did not target missionaries), condemned the riots. The ANDDH denounced the Islamic organizations, which were subsequently banned by the Government (see Section II) for violating the rights of Christians. Despite the attack, the SIM continued its extensive activities in the country and is viewed favorably by the community and the Government. In April 2001, the Government offered to pay SIM for its damages, but SIM stated that they would give the money to the police to buy equipment. The Abundant Life Church has repaired its facility using private donations from U.S. sources. In April 2001, two churches approached the persons detained for the violence with an offer to ask the Government to drop the charges if they admitted their guilt and expressed remorse; the detainees refused the offer.

There have been some efforts made to promote interfaith understanding. For example, the Baha'is have sponsored religious tolerance campaigns which have garnered local press coverage.

The Assemblies of God church in Niamey, which has been in its location since 1996, has had an ongoing problem with one of its neighbors, another Christian group that had been trying to have the church closed since its establishment. Despite an order by the Mayor in 1999 to close, the church remained open (see Section II).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy regularly emphasizes the importance of tolerance in its public statements and in meetings with government officials and members of civil society.

The U.S. Embassy maintains good relationships with minority religious groups, most of which are long-term resident missionaries and well-known members of the American community. Embassy officials also have contact with the Catholic mission, the Baha'i community, and Islamic organizations. During the period covered by this report, embassy officials met with leaders of a wide range of Islamic organizations, from mainstream academics to fundamentalists, to hear their perspectives on issues facing the country, such as AIDS.

In response to the incidents of November 2000 (see Section III), U.S. Embassy officials immediately went to Maradi and met with the missionary victims and senior government, police, and regional military officials. The U.S. Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission traveled to Maradi during the period covered by this report to demonstrate the U.S. Embassy's ongoing attention to religious freedom and tolerance.

NIGERIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance; however, the Government restricted these rights in practice in certain respects.

The status of respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the year due to the implementation of an expanded version of Shari'a (Islamic law) in several northern states, which challenged constitutional protections for religious freedom and sparked interreligious violence. The Constitution prohibits state and local governments from adopting an official religion; however, it also provides that states may elect to use Islamic (Shari'a) customary law and courts. Following the lead of Zamfara state, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Jigawa, Yobe, and Bauchi states also adopted varying forms of criminal Shari'a law. Government discrimination based on religion continued during the period covered by this report. Although Christians are exempt from Shari'a law, the ramifications of expanded Shari'a law infringed upon the rights of non-Muslims in the north to live in a society governed by secular laws.

Interreligious tension decreased in Kaduna state during the period covered by this report; however, other states, such as Zamfara and Gombe, saw interreligious tensions rise. While the widespread rioting that occurred in February and May 2000 was not repeated, there were reports of clashes between Muslims and Christians during the period covered by this report. There was some societal discrimination against religious minorities.

U.S. Embassy officials regularly discussed religious freedom issues with various federal, state and local officials. U.S. Embassy officials and U.S. Government officials based in Washington advocated the peaceful resolution of ethnic and religious conflicts in the country. The U.S. Government stressed that human rights and religious freedom must be respected in any resolution of the Shari'a question.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 356,700 square miles, and its population is estimated to be 120 million; however, there has not been an accurate census for more than 30 years, and many observers believe that the country's population may significantly exceed this figure. Approximately half of the country's population practice Islam; approximately 40 percent practice Christianity, and approximately 10 percent practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Many persons practice elements of Christianity or Islam and elements of a traditional indigenous religion. The predominant form of Islam in the country is Sunni. The Christian population includes Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, and a growing number of evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. Catholics constitute the largest Christian denomination.

There is a strong correlation between religious differences and ethnic and regional diversity. The north, which is dominated by the large Hausa and Fulani (Peuhl) ethnic groups, is predominantly Muslim; however, there are significant numbers of Christians in the middle belt and urban centers of the north, particularly in Kaduna and Jos. In the southwest, where the large Yoruba ethnic group is dominant, there is no dominant religion; Islam is practiced in a plurality, if not a majority, of the largest cities of the southwest due, in part, to the Hausa and Fulani communities in those regions. Many Yorubas practice Islam or Christianity, while others continue to practice the traditional Yoruba religion, which includes a belief in a supreme deity and the worship of lesser deities that serve as agents of the supreme deity in aspects of daily life. In the east, where the large Igbo ethnic group is dominant, Catholics and Methodists are in the majority, although many Igbos continue to observe traditional rites and ceremonies.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country and include Jesuits, Dominicans, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ, and the Society for International Missions. Rough estimates put the number of foreign missionaries at over 1,000, with many in the area around Jos, in Plateau state.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance; however, the Government restricted these rights in practice in certain respects.

The Constitution prohibits state and local governments from adopting an official religion; however, some Christians have alleged that Islam has been adopted as the de facto state religion of several northern states, given the reintroduction of Shari'a criminal law, and the continued use of state resources to fund the construction of mosques, the teaching of Alkalis (Muslim judges), and pilgrimages to Mecca (Hajj). However, state funds also are used to fund Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. In general states with a clear Christian or Muslim majority explicitly favor the majority faith. There are 36 states in the country; governors have autonomy in decision-making but derive their resources from the federal Government. Both the federal and state governments are involved in religious matters, including the regulation of mandatory religious instruction in public schools, subsidized construction of churches and mosques, state-sponsored participation in the Hajj, and pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

The Constitution provides that states may elect to use Islamic (Shari'a) customary law and courts. Until the reintroduction of criminal Shari'a by Zamfara State in January 2000, the jurisdiction of Shari'a courts, which are part of the regular court system, had been limited to family or personal law cases involving Muslims, or to civil disputes between Muslims who consent to the courts' jurisdiction. However, the Constitution states that a Shari'a court of appeal may exercise "such other jurisdiction as may be conferred upon it by the law of the State." Some states have interpreted this language as granting them the right to expand the jurisdiction of existing Shari'a courts to include criminal matters (see Section III). On October 8, 1999, the governor of Zamfara state, Ahmed Sani, signed a bill that established Shari'a courts and courts of appeal in Zamfara state, and another bill that constituted the Shari'a penal code; the bills took effect on January 27, 2000. Zamfara's law adopted traditional Shari'a in its entirety, with the exception that apostasy was not criminalized. Other Muslim communities, particularly from the states of Kano, Niger, Sokoto, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, and Katsina states, began to echo the call for Shari'a in their states. At the end of the period covered by this report, ten northern states had adopted variations of Shari'a law—Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna Jigawa, Yobe, and Bauchi. Adherence to the new Shari'a provisions is compulsory for Muslims in some states and optional in others. The Constitution also provides that the federal Government is to establish a Federal Shari'a Court of Appeal and Final Court of Appeal; however, the Government had not yet established such courts by the end of the period covered by this report.

In November 1999, President Obasanjo expressed the view that the expanded Shari'a provisions were unconstitutional; however, the federal Government did not intervene legally to annul the provisions. Defendants have the right to challenge the constitutionality of Shari'a criminal statutes through the courts; however, no challenges with adequate legal standing had made their way through the appellate system by the end of the period covered by this report. Huri-Laws, a domestic human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO), challenged the constitutionality of Zamfara Shari'a statutes in two separate cases. Huri-Laws was the plaintiff in the first case, and a Christian citizen from Zamfara state was the plaintiff in the second case. The Zamfara state high court dismissed both cases, ruling that the statute did not infringe on the rights of either plaintiff.

Christian and Islamic groups planning to build new churches or mosques are required to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). The law requires that such groups name a board of trustees, place a notice of the group's intent to organize in three nationwide newspapers, and send trustee information to the CAC. If no objections are received, the group can proceed with its meetings. This law was put into effect to stem the proliferation of new buildings in the absence of zoning laws, to resolve legal questions arising from disputes over church ownership and control, to provide a single registry for government reference in the event that compensation is demanded following civil disturbances, and to allow for legal solemnization of marriages. The CAC did not deny registration to any religious group during the period covered by this report; however, some religious groups experienced delays in obtaining permission from local zoning boards to build houses of worship.

The military's chaplaincy corps includes imams, Catholic priests, and Protestant pastors. There were no reports in the military of discrimination or nonadvancement to senior positions due to religious beliefs. No one religious faith dominates the senior ranks of the military.

The Government remained a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) during the period covered by this report and continued to send representatives to the annual meeting in Cairo despite concerns of Christian citizens that that this action undermined the concept of a secular state.

Each year the Government declares the following Islamic and Christian festival days as national holidays: Eidelkabit, Eidelfitr, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eidelmaulud, and Christmas Day.

Some state governors actively have encouraged interfaith and interethnic discussions. For example, Kaduna state governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi appointed Muslims and Christians to reconciliation committees following the riots of February and May 2000. Governor Makarfi also consulted with the reconciliation committees on proposed criminal law reforms.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Throughout the year, the Government nominally required organizers of outdoor public functions to apply for permits, although both government authorities and those assembling often ignored this requirement. The Government retained legal authority to ban gatherings whose political, ethnic, or religious content might lead to unrest. In September 2000, police in Lagos denied the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) a permit to hold a workshop on the adoption of Shari'a law. In 2000 several northern state governments banned open air preaching and public religious processions. The Kogi state government enacted such a ban on March 1, 2000; however, the ban was lifted by the end of the period covered by this report. The Kaduna state government followed shortly thereafter, enacting a ban on all forms of processions, rallies, demonstrations, and meetings in public places. Such bans were viewed as necessary public safety measures after approximately 2,000 people died in Shari'a related violence nationwide in 2000 (see Section III). For example, in March 2001, the authorities in Kaduna State cancelled a civil rights conference on Shari'a due to fears of potential violence from vigilante groups. None of these bans had been lifted formally by the end of the period covered by this report; however, state governments granted some permits on a case-by-case basis. In the southern part of the country, large outdoor religious gatherings continued to be common.

Following nationwide Shari'a-related violence in 2000, many northern states banned public proselytizing, although it is permitted by the Constitution. Some states relaxed these restrictions informally during the reporting period, and allowed some public proselytizing by Christians and Muslims. Missionaries reported that law enforcement officials harassed them when they proselytized outside of their designated zones. Both Christian and Muslim organizations alleged that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Immigration Department restricted the entry into the country of certain religious practitioners, particularly persons suspected of intending to proselytize. Proselytizing did not appear to be restricted in the southern part of the country. Many missionary groups also have noted bureaucratic delays and obstruction and attempts to extort money for the processing of necessary residence permits for foreigners; however, many foreign businesses and other nonreligious organizations also have encountered similar difficulties.

Although the expanded Shari'a laws technically do not apply to Christians, the Christian minority, especially in Zamfara state, was affected by many of the social provisions of the laws, such as the separation of the sexes in public transportation vehicles and bans on the sale of alcohol and alcohol consumption. Niger State has also enforced a ban on the selling of alcohol. In Zamfara state, Christian associations have arranged for private transportation services for Christian females so that they are not forced to wait for female only transportation provided by the Zamfara state government. Sokoto state's transportation system is run completely by private operators. Sokoto state governor Dalhatu Bafarawa said that the state cannot compel private operators to carry female passengers if doing so violates their religious convictions. In Zamfara state schoolchildren continued to be segregated by gender in schools. The Governor of Zamfara also disbursed public funds to refurbish mosques and pronounced that only persons with beards would win government contracts. There is a long tradition of separating schoolchildren by gender in the north; this practice was codified in Kebbi and Sokoto states in May 2000.

In Zamfara state, laws proposed during the period covered by this report included a dress code for women that bans short skirts and trousers, the mandatory closing of shops on Fridays, and a ban of video rental clubs. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) branch in Zamfara state has protested these new laws to the Zamfara state government. Reportedly they were told that the first law was proposed on public decency grounds, and that the second law only would apply to Muslim businesses.

Military bases are considered Shari'a free zones under the new laws; however, on at least one occasion, delivery of alcohol to a base in Kano was forcibly interdicted by Kano vigilantes (see Section III).

All Muslims in states that expanded Shari'a to criminal matters are subject to the new Shari'a criminal codes. In Zamfara state, all cases involving Muslims must be

heard by a Shari'a court. Other states with Shari'a law still permit Muslims to choose common law courts for criminal cases; however, societal pressure forces most Muslims to use the Shari'a court system.

In March 2001, journalists covering the implementation of Shari'a law in Bauchi state were warned by the governor, Ahmed Mu'azu, that they would be prosecuted if they misrepresented the Government's position on Shari'a; however, no journalists were arrested by the end of the period covered by this report.

The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, state government officials discriminated against adherents of minority religions in hiring practices and in the awarding of state contracts.

Christians in the predominantly Muslim northern states also alleged that local government officials used zoning regulations to stop or slow the establishment of new Christian churches. Officials have responded that many of these new churches are being formed in traditionally residential neighborhoods that were not zoned for religious purposes. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) offices in Zamfara and Sokoto states alleged that local authorities there delayed or denied to Christians certificates of occupancy (CO's), which are required to show title to land. For example, the Catholic Church in Zamfara state has been unable to retake possession of a clinic that was confiscated during a period of military rule in the 1970's. Renewal of the CO for the church building was approved; however, the Church has been unable to obtain a CO to reoccupy the clinic building and the adjoining land. Zamfara and Sokoto state officials denied that discrimination was behind the cases cited by CAN. State officials said the certification boards were dealing with a large backlog of cases for all persons, regardless of religious faith.

Although religious belief or adherence is not required for membership in registered political parties, in May 2001, the Zamfara state house assembly suspended for 3 months two of its Muslim members, Ibrahim Musa Murai and Abdullahi Majidadi Kurya, for not supporting bills introduced by the governor. They were accused of not showing full support for a compulsory closing of businesses, schools, and hospitals during Friday prayers and an enforced zakat (alms) payment to assist the needy.

Although distribution of religious publications remained generally unrestricted, the Government continued to enforce lightly a ban on published religious advertisements. There were reports by Christians in Zamfara state that the state government restricted the distribution of religious (Christian) literature. In 2000 Bishop Samson Bala of Gusau Diocese said that the state radio station had closed its doors to Christians. According to the Bishop Bala, commercials and paid advertisements containing Christian content were not accepted, and only Islamic religious programs were aired. Similar discrimination against the use of state-owned media for Muslim programming was reported in the south.

According to the Constitution, students are not required to receive instruction relating to a religion other than their own; however, public school students throughout the country were subjected to mandatory Islamic or Christian religious instruction. Islamic studies are mandatory in public schools in Zamfara and other northern states, to the exclusion of Christianity. State authorities claim that students are permitted to decline to attend these classes or to request a teacher of their own religion to provide alternative instruction; however, in practice the dominant religion of the state is taught in the school, and students cannot use these other mechanisms. There are reports that Christianity is taught in the same manner in Enugu and Edo states, and that Muslim students cannot access Koranic teaching in the public schools. During the period covered by this report, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) leaders volunteered to place teachers of Christianity in Zamfara and Sokoto state schools, where students alleged that they were being forced to take courses in Islamic religious knowledge in order to graduate. Governors of both states accepted the offer of assistance and stated that they had not been aware of the problem; however, CAN did not provide any teachers in either state during the reporting period. They indicated that schools in rural areas may not have qualified teachers of Biblical or Christian education classes, and that students in such schools have a right to opt out of Koranic knowledge classes, which otherwise would be required.

The Government continued to enforce a 1987 ban on religious organizations on campuses of primary schools, although individual students retain the right to practice their religions in recognized places of worship.

On December 5, 2000, over 1,500 Muslim students from the University of Ibadan and Ibadan public schools gathered at Oyo state government offices to protest the failure of public schools to offer Islamic studies courses alongside Christian courses. On November 30, 2000, the students also protested an attack by Christian theology students, described as Crusaders, on Islamic leaders, teachers, and students at Im-

manuel College Primary School. The police arrested the attackers but later released them without charge (see Section III).

The Government continued to settle property claims by Muslim Brotherhood leader Ibrahim El-Zakzaky for compensation for his home and mosque, which were razed by law enforcement in 1997.

There are no legal provisions barring women or other groups from testifying in civil court or giving their testimony less weight; however, the testimony of women and non-Muslims is usually accorded less weight in Shari'a courts. For example, if one woman testifies, a second woman must also provide testimony to equal the weight of the testimony of one man.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The extension of Shari'a law in many northern states generated a public debate on whether Shari'a punishments such as amputation for theft, and caning for fornication and public drunkenness constituted "torture or . . . inhuman or degrading treatment" as stipulated in the Constitution. Some northern states have administered amputations and canings pursuant to expanded Shari'a law. For example, on May 3, 2001, the government of Zamfara state amputated the hand of Lawal Isa Buzu, a convicted bicycle thief. The victim voluntarily submitted to the full Shari'a proceedings, including amputation, and chose not to appeal the decision. In September 2000, a Sokoto Shari'a court handed down a sentence of amputation for a thief; the sentence had not been carried out by year's end. In early July 2000, a sentence of amputation was carried out against a convicted thief.

In January 2001, Zamfara state officials caned 14-year old Bariya Magazu for fornication because she bore a child out of wedlock. Magazu reportedly was forced by her father to provide sexual favors to three men to whom he owed debts. Instead of prosecuting the three men for statutory rape, the court required Ms. Magazu to produce four witnesses to corroborate her testimony. Because she could not produce four witnesses, the Shari'a court handed down a sentence of 100 lashes for fornication and 80 additional lashes for bearing false testimony. Magazu appealed and the sentence temporarily was suspended; however, the judge eventually imposed a reduced sentence of 100 lashes. Magazu continued her appeal contesting the propriety of her conviction under Islamic law. Magazu's appeal was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Other convicted Muslim criminals in Shari'a law states were subjected to public caning for various minor offenses, such as petty theft, consumption of alcohol, and engaging in prostitution. For example, in August 2000, two motorcycle taxi drivers were caned for carrying Muslim female passengers in violation of the law in Zamfara State. Indigent persons without legal representation were more likely to have their sentences carried out immediately upon being sentenced.

Non-Muslims are not subject to Shari'a statutes; however, a Christian was tried for assault in a criminal Shari'a court in Kano state after he voluntarily chose that jurisdiction, apparently because the penalty of caning was less onerous than the potential penalty under common law.

A number of state sanctioned and private vigilante Shari'a enforcement groups have formed in states with expanded Shari'a law (see Section III). In Zamfara state, Governor Ahmed Sani vested the local vigilante group with full powers of arrest and prosecution because he believed that the police were not enforcing the new Shari'a laws. Governor Saminu Turaki of Jigawa state also mobilized a statewide Shari'a enforcement committee to arrest, detain, and prosecute Muslim offenders. In April 2001, the Katsina Arts and Musicians Association wrote to the Katsina House of Assembly protesting the arrest and detention of Sirajo Mai Asharalle. Asharalle was arrested by the state-sanctioned Rundunar Adalci vigilante group while performing music at a local function, but was released soon after his arrest. The performance of music and dancing was banned under the Shari'a law introduced by Katsina state.

On February 24, 2001, 10 persons were killed and 3 persons were injured when youths claiming to be Shi'ite Muslims clashed with police during a protest following the visit of Israeli Ambassador Itzhak Oren to Gombe state. The youths also burned two churches and a nightclub.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

Curfews, bans on large religious gatherings outside of traditional houses of worship, bans on religious processions, and bans on proselytization remain in effect; however, some local and state authorities informally relaxed the bans in practice, and allowed some public proselytizing.

During the reporting period, the Government contributed approximately \$3.63 million (400 million naira) to pay restitution to victims of the February 2000 riots. Governor Makarfi of Kaduna state provided a similar amount in state funds.

Since the outbreak of Shari'a-related violence in 2000 (see Section III), the governors of Kaduna, Abia, and Lagos states have taken steps to prevent further violence and tension. During the period covered by this report, the governors made more tempered public statements, and focused on shared economic opportunities between residents of their states and migrants, including ethnic minorities, from other regions of the country. During the period covered by this report, Governor Makarfi of Kaduna state visited many southern and middlebelt states to apologize for the loss of life during the Kaduna riots. He emphasized the importance of respecting ethnic and religious diversity, and he encouraged those who left Kaduna state to return.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious differences often correspond to regional and ethnic differences. For example, the northern region and much of the middlebelt are overwhelmingly Muslim, as are the large Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups of that area. Many southern ethnic groups are predominantly Christian. Consequently it is often difficult to distinguish between religious conflict and discrimination, and ethnic conflict and discrimination. Religious tensions often underscored what were predominantly ethnic confrontations.

In February and May 2000, rioting between Muslim and Christian groups over the proposed extension of Shari'a in Kaduna caused the deaths of more than 1,500 persons and massive property destruction. Over 500 persons, predominantly of the Hausa ethnic group, were killed in reprisals that took place in Abia, Imo, and other eastern states. While the widespread rioting that occurred in February and May 2000 was not repeated during the period covered by this report, there were reports of clashes between Muslims and Christians.

On September 7, 2000, Christians attacked Muslims during a riot in Bambam, Gombe state, following the visit of a committee investigating public opinion on the introduction of Shari'a law. Governor Abubakar Hashidu stated that 18 Muslims died during the rioting. A number of mosques, churches, shops, homes, and vehicles were destroyed in the riot. In September 2000, Gombe state governor Abubakar Hashidu set up a judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the religious clash that took place in Bambam in 2000. The 17-member committee includes both Christians and Muslims.

In late November 2000, Muslim youths attacked Christian residents, shops, and buildings in Jigawa state. Reportedly the students were angry about statements made against Islam and the Prophet that appeared in a publication by a National Youth Service Corps member. At least one person died in the violence, and a number of churches and stores were burned.

In December 2000, Muslim students alleged that they were beaten by Christian seminary students from a neighboring school during protests in Lagos state (see Section II).

In May 2001, violence again erupted in Gombe state during legislative debate on the introduction of Shari'a law. Christian groups organized protests in the town of Kano that turned violent. According to a government spokesman, four persons were injured, a number of shops were looted, and a mosque and a church were burned down.

Following the violence related to the expansion of Shari'a law in February and May 2000, several committees were established, both by government officials and by religious leaders, to work for peace and a better understanding between Christians and Muslims, and to obtain a solution to the Shari'a debate (see Section II). During the period covered by this report, committee members traveled to several northern and middle-belt states to appeal for interreligious tolerance.

In July 2000, a Hausa woman who violated a religious taboo against women viewing a Yoruba festival was killed by a mob. This incident ignited reciprocal ethnic violence in the northern, predominately Hausa city of Kano, with the Hausa majority attacking the Yoruba minority. Approximately 80 persons died over a 4 day period; the majority of the victims were Yorubas.

Vigilante groups formed during the period covered by this report to enforce the new Shari'a laws, and in some cases, punish offenders. Some of these vigilante groups were state-sanctioned (see Section II). In January 2001, criminal youths posing as Shari'a enforcers beat Livinus Obi, an Igbo Christian, for allegedly selling beer in Kano State. They also invaded his home, broke bottles of beer, and stole money and liquor. Although the assailants were brought before a Shari'a court on charges of assault and theft, Obi dropped the charges because he feared testifying against neighbors involved in the attack. In early 2000, vigilantes pulled a woman from a motorcycle for breaking the new rule requiring separate transportation for women in a local government area of Zamfara State; she was injured in the attack. The woman was not a Muslim.

In Kano state, an unofficial vigilante group known as Hisbah began taking action against both Muslims and Christians who violate the new Shari'a laws. In February 2001, youths in the Hisbah attacked a truck bringing alcohol to a military base in Kano state, and attacked the Nigeria Union of Journalists press center in Kano following allegations that alcohol was served on the premises. On April 14, 2001, Kano state Deputy Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje led vigilante enforcers and national police to five of Kano's largest hotels and ordered them to stop selling alcohol. Unofficial vigilante officials broke liquor bottles and engaged in minor vandalism at the hotels. On April 16, 2001, the Hisbah burnt down the Henzino Hotel, an establishment known for serving alcohol in a predominantly Muslim neighborhood. In April 2001, some Kano state hotels stopped renting conference halls to Christian groups for fear of being targets of this vigilante violence.

The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, private businesses frequently are guilty of informal religious and ethnic discrimination in their hiring practices and purchasing patterns. In nearly all states, ethnic rivalries between majority groups and minority "immigrants" lead to some societal discrimination against minority ethnic and religious groups.

Purdah, the Islamic practice of keeping girls and women in seclusion from men outside the family, continued in parts of the far north.

In the north, Muslim communities favor boys over girls in deciding which children to enroll in secondary and elementary schools.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials regularly discussed religious freedom issues with various federal, state and local officials. Embassy officials raised religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of the U.S. Government's overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Embassy and in statements from officials in Washington, sought to encourage a peaceful resolution to the Shari'a issue and urged that human rights and religious freedom be respected in any resolution. The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) also have created programs for conflict resolution training. During a visit to the country in August 2000, former President Clinton appealed for interreligious and interethnic understanding and cooperation.

RWANDA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, while the Government generally respects this right in practice, it imposes some restrictions.

There was an improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In July 2000, there were reports of detentions of members of Jehovah's Witnesses by local officials and of radio broadcasts by local officials announcing restrictions on the Jehovah's Witnesses' right of assembly and worship. However, discussions between church leaders, government officials, and U.S. Embassy officials resulted in a reversal of the Government's policy, and in May 2001, leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses in the country reported that they enjoyed religious freedom and that no members of their church were detained or in prison. Tensions lessened between the Catholic Church and the Government, largely due to the clearing of Archbishop Misago of genocide charges, and the reconsecration of some churches and their return to service, as well as increased dialog. However, the Government tore down some storefront churches and continued to watch closely for the development of cult churches after the doomsday cult deaths in Uganda in 2000.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,169 square miles and its population is approximately 8.1 million. A 2001 study conducted by researchers from Johns Hopkins University reported that 49.6 percent of the population were Catholic, 43.9 percent Protestant, 4.6 percent Muslim, 1.7 claimed no religious beliefs, and 0.1 percent practiced traditional indigenous beliefs. This study indicated a 19.9 percent increase in the number of Protestants, a 7.6 percent drop in the number of Catholics, and a 3.5 percent increase in the number of Muslims from the United Nations Population Fund survey in 1996. The figures for Protestants include the growing number of members of Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelical Protestant groups. There also is a small population of Baha'is. There has been a proliferation of small, usually Christian-linked sects since the 1994 genocide.

Foreign missionaries and church-linked nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) of various faiths operate in the country, including Trocaire, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Federation, World Vision, World Relief, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Norwegian Church Aid, Salvation Army, African Muslim Agency, American Jewish Distribution Committee, Jesuit Relief Society, Christian Aid, Christian Direct Outreach, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and Jesus Alive Ministries.

There is no indication that religious belief is linked directly to membership in any political party. Of the eight parties, the only one with a religious component to its name—the Democratic Islamic Party—claims to have non-Muslim members.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, while the Government generally respects this right in practice, it imposes some restrictions. There is no state religion.

The law provides for small fines and imprisonment for up to 6 months for anyone who interferes with a religious ceremony or with a minister in the exercise of his profession.

On April 1, 2001, the Government promulgated a law requiring all nonprofit organizations, including churches and religious organizations, to register with the Ministry of Justice in order to be granted the status of a "legal entity." The registration requirement is not new, and groups can maintain their up-to-date valid registrations, renewing them only when they expire. Major religious groups and churches reported no difficulties in registering with the Ministry of Justice.

Foreign missionaries openly promote their religious beliefs, and the Government has welcomed their development assistance.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. In some cases, students are given a choice between instruction in "religion" or "morals." In the past, missionaries established schools that were operated by the Government. In those schools, religious instruction tends to reflect the denomination of the founders, either Catholic or Protestant. Christian and Muslim private schools operate as well.

The Government observes four religious holidays as official holidays: Christmas, The Idd-El-Fitr, All Saints' Day, and Assumption.

The Government, within its limited financial means, has sponsored or participated in a number of religious fora aimed at increasing interfaith understanding and support.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government forbade religious meetings at night on the grounds that insurgents formerly used the guise of nighttime "religious meetings" to assemble their supporters before attacking nearby targets; however, by the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had stopped restricting religious meetings at night and had lifted local restrictions on meetings for worship and proselytizing.

In late 2000, several "storefront" churches consisting of wooden frames covered by plastic sheeting were torn down because the churches were not registered with the Ministry of Justice. In late 2000, a few "storefront" evangelical preachers applied for status as nonprofit groups but were refused following a determination by the Ministry that the groups were profit-oriented. However, by the end of the period covered by this report, the Government's strategy had changed to one of urging the groups to register with the Ministry of Justice in order to regularize their status.

At least one application for registration was accepted, and some applications were pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

In July 2000, there were reports of radio broadcasts by local officials announcing restrictions on the Jehovah's Witnesses' right of assembly and worship; however, by the end of the period covered by this report, there were no further reports of restrictions on Jehovah's Witnesses.

There were no reports of any adherents of the Temperance or Abagorozi groups being detained during the period covered by this report.

The Government continued to watch closely for the development of cult churches after the doomsday cult deaths in Uganda in 2000. During the period covered by this report, government officials noted their concerns regarding doomsday cults developing in the country in local newspapers.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Local officials detained members of Jehovah's Witnesses for refusing to participate in nightly security patrols; however, there have been no reports of detention or harassment since late 2000.

Several members of the clergy of various faiths have faced charges of genocide in Rwandan courts, in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and in foreign courts, notably in Belgium. Catholic Bishop Misago, who was cleared of genocide related charges in June 2000, again appeared on the list of accused genocidaires after the prosecution announced its intention to appeal the verdict. On October 25, 2000, two Catholic priests were released when their 1998 convictions on genocide charges were overturned on appeal.

Numerous groups, particularly human rights groups, reported that Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) troops and Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) targeted Catholic clergy for abuse. Abuses reportedly took the form of attacks on missions, killings of priests, the rape of nuns, and the burning of churches. Credible reports indicate that RCD and RPA troops deliberately targeted Catholic churches as a means of both intimidating the local population and in retaliation for the Church's perceived role in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Between February and September 2000, RCD rebels and Rwandan authorities operating in the DRC kept Archbishop Kataliko of Bukavu in exile in the Kivu provinces because they suspected him of condoning resistance to the rebellion. These authorities only allowed the Archbishop's return to Bukavu, DRC, on September 14, 2000, following significant U.S. and international pressure. The Archbishop died of a heart attack the following month while in Rome.

Some religious leaders were perpetrators of violence and discrimination. For example, on June 8, 2001, a jury in Belgium convicted four Rwandans—a physics professor, a former government minister, and a nun and her mother superior from a Benedictine convent—for complicity in the murder of approximately 7,000 Tutsis in and around the town of Sovu in the spring of 1994. The two nuns were sentenced to 12 and 15 years, respectively, and the professor and former government minister were sentenced to 12 and 20 years, respectively.

There were no reports of religious prisoners, although some Jehovah's Witnesses were detained in 2000 for refusing to participate in nightly security patrols.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In the latter half of 2000, the Government lifted restrictions on Jehovah's Witnesses holding meetings and preaching publicly. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses who were detained for non-participation in nightly security patrols were released by September 2000. Senior government officials intervened personally with local officials to ensure that religious freedom is respected at all government levels, and local church members reported that harassment of members by local officials had ceased and that the church now enjoys religious freedom.

Unlike in previous years, few Catholic officials repeated the claim that the Government is prejudiced against the Church; senior clergy reported that relations between the Church and the Government had improved because of collaboration and dialog in the areas of education and reconciliation. The Church and the Government moved closer to a resolution of the question of using churches as genocide memorials, and several churches were reconsecrated and returned to serving the community.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the different religious groups generally are amicable. Disputes between religious groups are rare; however, in July 2000, some local authorities increased tensions between groups when they harassed members of the Jehovah's Witnesses for not participating in nightly security patrols and publicly pointed out that Protestants, Muslims, and Catholics participated regularly (see Section II).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials maintain regular contact with leaders and members of the religious communities in the country.

In July and August 2000, U.S. Embassy officials approached senior government officials in regards to complaints of harassment and detention from local and international offices of Jehovah's Witnesses. In early 2001, Embassy officials discussed the destruction of small storefront churches with senior Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Local Governance and Social Affairs officials.

U.S. Embassy political officers held numerous meetings with members of the Catholic and Anglican Churches, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, leaders of the Muslim community, and small, evangelical Protestant groups, among others, to promote interfaith dialog and discuss religious freedom. In addition Embassy political officers regularly met with local and international nongovernmental organizations involved in peace, justice, and reconciliation efforts that focus on religious tolerance and freedoms.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 622 square miles and its population is 138,000. The population predominantly is Roman Catholic. Approximately 90 percent of the population are Catholic, 5 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, 5 percent are atheist, and less than 1 percent are Protestant.

There are Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the country, and missionaries of other religions also operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Religious organizations are required to register with the Government; however, there were no reports that any groups were denied registration or that the activities of unregistered groups were restricted.

There are no restrictions on the activities of foreign clergy, and missionaries in the country operate unhindered.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy, based in Libreville, Gabon, discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. In addition embassy officials regularly meet with the country's Catholic bishop during visits to the country.

SENEGAL

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government maintains relations with all major religious groups in the country and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 74,132 square miles, and its population is 9,987,494. According to current government demographic data, Islam is the predominant religion and is practiced by approximately 94 percent of the country's population. There is also an active Christian community (4 percent), including Roman Catholics and diverse Protestant denominations. An estimated 2 percent (the remainder of the population) practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion.

The country is ethnically and religiously diverse. Although there is significant integration of all groups, there are identifiable geographic concentrations of some religious groups. The Christian minority is concentrated in the western and southern regions of the country, while groups that practice traditional religions are concentrated in the eastern and southern regions.

A wide variety of foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Catholics, Protestant denominations, independent missionaries, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion; the Constitution specifically defines the country as a secular state and provides for the free practice of religious beliefs, provided that public that order is maintained.

Religious organizations are independent of the Government and, in practice, administer their affairs without government interference. While individuals and groups may practice their beliefs without government sanction, any group—religious or other—that wants to form an association with legal status must register with the Minister of the Interior in accordance with the civil and commercial code. Registration, which generally is granted, enables an association to conduct business, including owning property, establishing a bank account, and receiving financial contributions from any private source. Registered religious groups, including all registered nonprofit organizations, also are exempt from many forms of taxation. The Minister of Interior must have a legal basis for refusing registration. There were no reports

that any applications for such registration were delayed or denied during the period covered by this report.

Religious organizations can receive direct financial and material assistance from the Government. While there is no official system of government grants, the importance of religion in society often results in the Government providing grants to religious groups to maintain their places of worship or undertake special events. The Government also provides funds through the Ministry of Education to schools operated by religious institutions that meet national education standards. In practice Christian schools, which have a long and successful experience in education, receive the largest share of this government funding.

Because the Constitution provides for separation of religion and state, religious education or worship is not permitted in public schools. Privately owned schools, whether or not they receive government grants, may provide religious education. The majority of students attending Christian schools are Muslims.

Missionaries, like other long-term visitors, must obtain a residence visa issued by the Interior Ministry. Religious groups, including Islamic groups, often establish a presence in the country as nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). NGO's already registered in a foreign country obtain permission to operate in the country from the Minister of the Family, Social Action, and National Solidarity. There were no reports that the Government refused visas or permission to operate to any group. Both religious and nonreligious NGO's are very active in providing social services and administering economic development assistance programs.

The Government encourages and helps organize Muslim participation in the Hajj every year. It also provides similar assistance for an annual Catholic pilgrimage to the Vatican.

While there is no specific government-sponsored institution to promote interfaith dialog, the Government generally seeks to promote religious harmony by maintaining relations with all important religious groups. Senior government officials regularly consult with religious leaders and the Government generally is represented at all major religious festivals or events.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government monitors foreign missionary groups, and religious and nonreligious NGO's, to ensure that their activities coincide with their stated objectives. In the past, the Government expelled groups from the country when their activities were judged to be political in nature and a threat to public order; however, there were no reports that any foreign religious groups were asked to leave the country during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religion plays an important role in the lives of most citizens, and society is generally very open to and tolerant of different religious faiths. The country has a long tradition of amicable and tolerant coexistence between the Muslim majority and the Christian, traditional indigenous, and other religious minorities. Interfaith marriage is relatively common. Within certain families, other religious faiths, such as Christianity or a traditional indigenous religion, are practiced alongside Islam.

Islamic communities generally are organized around one of several brotherhoods, headed by a Khalif who is a direct descendant of the group's founder. The two largest and most prominent of these brotherhoods are the Tidjanes, based in the city of Tivouane, and the Mourides, based in the city of Touba. At times there have been disputes within the different brotherhoods over questions of succession or general authority. However, relations between these Islamic subgroups generally have been peaceful and cooperative. In recent years, a National Committee to Coordinate Sightings of the Moon and hence the designation of Muslim holy days has been formed at the suggestion of the Government, effectively increasing cooperation among the Islamic subgroups.

While the brotherhoods are not involved directly in politics or government affairs, these groups exert considerable influence in society and therefore maintain a dialog with political leaders. Close association with a brotherhood, as with any influential community leader, religious or secular, may afford certain political and economic protections and advantages that are not conferred by law. During the legislative election campaign in April 2001, many candidates consulted with and actively

sought the support of Islamic brotherhood leaders; however, no religious leaders of any note issued instructions to their followers to vote for selected candidates. Among the 25 parties contesting the election, only 3 ran on a religion-based platform. None of these three parties garnered more than 0.5 percent of the vote or won a National Assembly seat.

Leaders of the larger religious groups, both Islamic and Christian, long have maintained a public dialog with one another. For example, the former Archbishop who led the country's Catholic community and the Khalifs of the larger Islamic brotherhoods have contributed for decades to a positive interfaith dialog. The Catholic-sponsored Brottier Center has promoted debate and dialog between Muslims and Christians on political and social issues that confront the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains relations with all major religious groups in the country. The Ambassador meets with the leaders or their representatives at various times throughout the year to discuss social and political issues. The Embassy maintains contacts with several religious-based NGO's, foreign missionary groups operating in the country, and human rights organizations and activists in order to monitor issues of religious freedom. The Ambassador or his representative regularly attends all major annual religious festivals or gatherings to promote an open dialog with various religious groups.

SEYCHELLES

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

There was no change in the status of 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 176 square miles and its population is approximately 81,000. According to figures gathered in the 1994 census, 88 percent of the population are Roman Catholic and 8 percent are Anglican. There are other Christian churches, including Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Assembly of God, the Pentecostal Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hinduism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith also are practiced. Almost 50 percent of the population are estimated to practice their faith regularly. It is unknown if there are atheists in the country.

A few foreign missionary groups practice in the country, including the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic organization.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh-Day Adventist churches and the Islamic mosques each have their own acts of incorporation. The Baha'i local spiritual assembly was incorporated in 1999. Other churches that are not a body corporate are registered as associations with the Registrar General and are entitled to tax-free privileges, similar to a charity. All religious organizations must register in order to be entitled to tax-free privileges. If an organization does not want tax-free privileges, it does not have to register.

The Government tends to remain outside of religious matters, but provides program time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. On Sundays a radio broadcast of a Catholic Mass alternates each week with a broadcast of an Anglican service. The Islam and Hindu faiths are allowed 15-

minute broadcasts every Friday, and the Baha'i and Seventh-Day Adventists faiths are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Saturday.

In March 2000, the Government announced that government employees of the Baha'i faith could take paid leave on Baha'i holy days. This leave had not been available previously to members of the Baha'i or other faiths. At the time of the announcement, the Government also stated that other religions could submit applications for the recognition of similar unpaid leave days. In May 2000, the Government announced that government employees of all faiths could request paid leave on any of their holy days, and such leave generally is granted. President France Albert Rene's wife of 10 years is a member of the Baha'i Faith, while the majority of government ministers are Catholic.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government did not demonstrate favoritism toward one religion over another; however, in early 2000, the Seychelles National Party (SNP), which is the opposition political party and is led by an Anglican minister, claimed that the Government gave a grant of \$164,000 (900,000 Seychelles Rupees) to the Baha'i faith in 1999, following its incorporation. According to the SNP, this grant has not been offered to other faiths that have been established recently in the country. According to the Government, \$192,000 (1 million Seychelles Rupees) of the national budget is allocated to provide assistance to faiths that request it. The grant to the Baha'i faith was for the purpose of building a temple, and in the past, the Anglican, Hindu, and Roman Catholic faiths have benefited from government grants.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious groups and tolerance for individual religious choice.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SIERRA LEONE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 27,653 square miles, and its population is approximately 4.5 million. Reliable data on the exact numbers of those who practice major religions are not available; however, most sources estimate that the population is 60 percent Muslim, 30 percent Christian, and 10 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. There is no information concerning the number of atheists in the country.

Reportedly many syncretistic practices exist, with up to 20 percent of the population practicing a mixture of Islam and traditional indigenous religions or Christianity and traditional indigenous religions.

Historically most Muslims have been concentrated in the northern areas of the country, and Christians were located in the south; however, the ongoing civil war has resulted in movement by major segments of the population.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government has no requirements for recognizing, registering, or regulating religious groups.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Students are allowed to choose whether they attend either Muslim- or Christian-oriented classes.

The Government has not taken any specific steps to promote interfaith understanding.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

At the end of the period covered by this report, 60 percent of the country was under the control of rebel forces. There were no reports of restrictions on religious freedom in areas controlled by rebels. Some Roman Catholic clergy in rebel controlled areas were able to continue their work during the period covered by this report.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

While government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion, rebel groups operating in the country committed a number of abuses.

Rebels have targeted Roman Catholic priests and nuns, largely on the assumption that the Church would pay ransom for their return. Some religious leaders were targeted by rebels for their peacekeeping activities as members of civil society, not because of their religion. For example, on July 21, 2000, rebels from the West Side Boys abducted 4 church workers, allegedly because they feared an attack by the Government, and released them after 10 days. On September 7, 2000, Revolutionary United Front insurgents abducted two missionary priests and brought them to Sierra Leone. The priests were not mistreated and were allowed some freedom of movement; they later escaped.

In the past, rebel forces attacked both churches and mosques; however, there were no reports of such attacks during the period covered by this report.

Forced Religious Conversions

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and interfaith marriage is common. The Inter-Religious Council (IRC), composed of Christian and Muslim leaders, plays a vital role in civil society and actively participates in efforts to further the peace process. The IRC criticizes the use of force and atrocities committed by the rebels, endorses reconciliation and peace talks, and facilitates rehabilitation of the victims affected by the war, including former child soldiers.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Ambassador is in frequent contact with the IRC and its individual members.

SOMALIA

There is no constitution and no legal provision for the protection of religious freedom; there were some limits on religious freedom.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. There is no central government; a Transitional National Government is headquartered in Mogadishu, but it exercises little effective control over the rest of the country. Some local administrations, including the "Republic of

Somaliland” and “Puntland,” have made Islam the official religion in their regions. Local tradition and past law make proselytizing a crime for any religion except Islam. Islamic court militias at times administered summary punishments, including executions.

Non-Sunni Muslims often are viewed with suspicion by members of the Sunni majority.

The U.S. Government does not maintain an official presence in the country. The lack of diplomatic representation has limited the U.S. Government’s ability to take action to promote religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 246,200 square miles and its population is approximately 7,253,137. Citizens overwhelmingly are Sunni Muslim. There are a small number of non-Sunni Muslims. There also is a small, extremely low-profile Christian community, in addition to small numbers of adherents of other religions. The number of adherents to strains of conservative Islam is growing. In 2000 the number of Islamic schools funded by religiously conservative sources continued to grow (see Section III).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

There is no constitution and no legal provision for the protection of religious freedom; there were some limits on religious freedom.

There is no central government. A Transitional National Government has been headquartered in Mogadishu since October 2000, but it exercises little effective control over the country. The Transitional Charter, adopted in July 2000 but not implemented by the end of the period covered by this report, establishes Islam as the national religion. Some local administrations, including the “Republic of Somaliland” and “Puntland,” have made Islam the official religion in their regions. The judiciary in most regions relies on some combination of traditional and customary law (Xeer), Shari’a law, the penal code of the pre-1991 Siad Barre government, or some combination of the three. There are three Islamic courts operating in Mogadishu, which are aligned with different subclans, raising doubts about their independence. These courts are administrative bodies that are supported by militias and operate as judicial systems. The Government has established a working relationship with the courts, and over 40 percent of the staff of the Transitional National Government’s police force comes from the courts. In June 2001, Dr. Abdiqasim Salad Hasan, President of the Transitional National Government, announced that the Islamic courts in Mogadishu had been nationalized and would operate under state supervision. Despite the nationalization and the working relationship, the Government does not yet have effective control over the courts.

In March 1999, the Minister of Religion in Somaliland issued a list of instructions and definitions on religious practices. Under the new rules, religious schools and places of worship are required to obtain the Ministry of Religion’s permission to operate. The Ministry must approve entry visas for religious groups, and certain unspecified doctrines are prohibited. In Puntland religious schools and places of worship must receive permission from the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs to operate.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Local tradition and past law make proselytizing a crime for any religion except Islam. Proselytizing for any religion except Islam is prohibited by law in Puntland and Somaliland and effectively blocked by informal social consensus elsewhere in the country. Christian-based international relief organizations generally operate without interference, provided that they refrain from proselytizing.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Article 8 of the Transitional National Charter and Article 6.3 of the Puntland Charter prohibit torture “unless sentenced by Islamic Sharia Courts in accordance with Islamic Sharia law;” however, while Islamic courts generally refrained from administering the stricter Islamic punishments, such as amputation, their militias administered summary punishments, including executions, in and around the city. In June 2000, an Islamic Court in Buulo village, Lower Shabelle, sentenced Nuurto Muhammad Ali to death by stoning after she was discovered to have three husbands. Nuurto’s execution was suspended, and after she gave birth, she was released. In February 2001, the Islamic Court Militias based in Mogadishu flogged

Omar Dini, a reporter for the Mogadishu-based newspaper Qaran, for writing an allegedly anti-Islamic article.

On February 3, 2000, Somaliland authorities briefly detained nine Ethiopian citizens for allegedly proselytizing Christianity; all nine were deported following their release.

Seven Christian Ethiopians arrested in Somaliland in May 1999 for allegedly attempting to proselytize remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

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 by local authorities to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Non-Sunni Muslims often are viewed with suspicion by members of the Sunni majority. There is strong social pressure to respect Islamic traditions, especially in enclaves controlled by radical Islamists, such as El Wak in the Gedo region and Doble, Ras Chaimboni, and Kulbiyow in the Lower Juba region. There was an increase in religious intolerance among Muslims by Al'Ittihad, a local radical Islamic group, which is affiliated with the international Al'Ittihad group. There were no reports of mosque takeovers during the period covered by this report.

The number of externally funded Koranic schools continued to increase throughout the country during the period covered by this report. These schools are inexpensive and provide basic education; however, there were reports that these schools required the veiling of small girls, as well as requiring other conservative Islamic practices not normally found in the local culture. Mogadishu University and many secondary schools in Mogadishu are externally funded and administered through organizations affiliated with the conservative Islamic organization Al-Islah.

There is a small, low-profile Christian community. Christians, as well as other non-Muslims who proclaim their religion, sometimes face societal harassment.

There are no ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater religious toleration.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain an official presence in the country. This lack of diplomatic representation has limited the U.S. Government's ability to take action to promote religious freedom.

SOUTH AFRICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there is a concern among some Christians about the perceived growing influence of Islam. Reports of violence perpetrated by the People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) have fueled these concerns.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 470,462 square miles and its population is approximately 43,680,000. According to the 1996 census, approximately 87 percent of the population adhere to the Christian faith. Approximately 3 percent of the population indicated that they belong to other religions, including traditional indigenous religions, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Rastafarianism. Approximately 9 percent of the population indicated that they belong to no particular religion or refused to indicate their affiliation.

The African Independent Churches make up the largest grouping of Christian Churches. There are 4,000 or more African Independent Churches, with a total

membership of more than 10 million persons. Although these churches originally were founded as breakaways from various mission churches (the so-called Ethiopian churches), the African Independent Churches consist mostly of Zionist or apostolic churches and also include some Pentecostal offshoots. The Zion Christian Church is the largest African Independent Church. The African Independent Churches attract persons from rural and urban areas.

The Nederduits Gereformeerde, or Dutch Reformed, family of churches consists of 3 related churches that represent almost 4 million persons. The Nederduits Gereformeerde Church is the largest of these 3 churches with a total of 1,263 congregations. Its member churches are the United Reformed Church of South Africa and the small Reformed Church in Africa, whose members predominantly are Indian. The Nederduitsch Hervormde and Gereformeerde Churches also are regarded as part of the Dutch Reformed Church family. In recent years, there has been a move away from the Dutch Reformed churches by Afrikaners to charismatic and Baptist churches.

Other established Christian churches include the Roman Catholic Church, which has grown steadily in numbers and influence in recent years and consists of approximately 8.6 percent of the population; the Methodist Church (7 percent); the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican, 4 percent); various Lutheran (2.6 percent) and Presbyterian churches (1.8 percent); and the Congregational Church (1 percent). Although they consist of slightly more than 1 percent of the population, the Baptist churches represent a strong church tradition. The largest traditional Pentecostal churches are the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Church. A number of charismatic churches have been established in recent years. The subsidiary churches of the charismatic churches, together with those of the Hatfield Christian Church in Pretoria, are grouped in the International Fellowship of Christian Churches. The Greek Orthodox and Seventh-Day Adventist Churches also are active.

Approximately 9 percent of the total population claim no affiliation with any formal religious organization. The majority of these persons adhere to traditional indigenous religions. A common feature of the traditional indigenous religions is the importance of ancestors. Ancestors are regarded as part of the community and as indispensable links with the spirit world and the powers that control everyday affairs. Ancestors are not gods, but because they play a key part in bringing about either good or ill fortune, maintaining good relations with them is vital. Followers of traditional indigenous religions also believe that certain practitioners can manipulate the power of the spirits by applying elaborate procedures that are passed down through word-of-mouth. Some practitioners use herbs and other therapeutic techniques; others claim supernatural powers. As a result of close contact with Christianity, many persons find themselves in a transitional phase somewhere between traditional indigenous religions and Christianity.

Nearly half of Indians are Hindus, and the remainder is either Muslim (23 percent) or Christian (20 percent), with a small number of followers of various other religions. The Jewish population is less than 100,000 persons; of these the majority are Orthodox Jews. There has been a slight shift towards the Muslim faith by blacks.

Churches are well attended in both rural and urban areas, and most are staffed adequately by a large number of clerics and officials.

A number of Christian organizations, including the Salvation Army, Promise Keepers, Operation Mobilization, Campus Crusade, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, operate in the country doing missionary work, giving aid, and providing training. The Muslim World League also is active in the country, as is the Zionist International Federation.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Bill of Rights prohibits the State from unfairly discriminating directly or indirectly against anyone on the ground of religion, and it states that persons belonging to a religious community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community, to practice their religion and to form, join, and maintain religious associations. Cases of discrimination against a person on the grounds of religious freedom can be taken to the Constitutional Court.

Christianity is the dominant religion in the country, but no religion is declared the official state religion by law. The ruling party favors no religion in particular

and leading members of this party belong to at least three church groupings (Zionist Christian, Roman Catholic, and Methodist churches), in addition to other non-Christian faiths.

Religious groups are not required to be licensed or registered.

The Constitution states that religious instruction at public schools is permitted so long as it is voluntary and religions are treated equally. The current syllabus allows local boards to decide whether to include religious instruction in their schools. Many public schools have dropped religious instruction in practice. In schools that do administer religious instruction, students have the right not to attend the religious instruction, and school authorities respect this right in practice. There are some private religious schools in which religious instruction is required.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In February 2001, nine pupils were suspended from their high school for wearing dreadlocks. The students claimed that they subscribed to Rastafarianism as a religion, which they claimed requires that adherents grow their hair. The Department of Education allowed the children back into the school and stated that the Department would allow pupils wearing dreadlocks to attend school, if they were members of the Rastafarian religion. The Department asked the school to launch an investigation to determine whether the children were Rastafari in fact.

In November 2000, a candidate attorney asked the Constitutional Court to rule that adult Rastafari should be exempted from the application of statutory provisions that make the possession and use of cannabis illegal and subject to a fine or imprisonment, because the use of cannabis is considered to be part of the practice of Rastafarianism. The candidate attorney was refused admission in 1997 as an attorney on the grounds of convictions for possession and use of cannabis, which is an offence in the country. The Western Cape Director of Public Prosecution has opposed the candidate attorney's application, due to the link between cannabis and violent crime in that province. The case was heard on May 17, 2001, and the judgement was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

On March 21, 2001, approximately 500,000 persons attended a gathering at Newlands Rugby Stadium in Cape Town that was organized by Christian groups and endorsed by 600 Christian leaders to promote unifying the city and addressing unacceptable levels of crime, violence, poverty, bombings, gangsterism, and drug trafficking through celebration and prayer for divine intervention through the power of gospel. Education Minister Kader Asmal, who spoke at an African National Congress (ANC) gathering in nearby Langa, criticized the gathering as sectarian, divisive, and non-inclusive. Asmal also claimed that a day of great importance, such as Human Rights Day, had been used by the organizers to promote a particular religious viewpoint, rather than the philosophy of the day. Religious leaders, opposition parties, and the media criticized Asmal's comments and accused him, and by extension the ANC, of disrespecting the rights of freedom of association. Asmal apologized repeatedly for his comments, stated that in no way is he opposed to Christianity, and affirmed his commitment to religious freedom.

During the 1998/1999 licensing season, the Independent Broadcasting Authority's Broadcasting Monitoring Complaints Committee found the Muslim Community Radio Station, Radio Islam, guilty of violating its license conditions because, among other things, it refused to allow women to speak on the air. In March 2001, the station applied for and was granted a 12-month temporary license because of compliance with license conditions. The station now has women on its board and also on the air.

Members of the group PAGAD complained that they were the targets of police brutality. PAGAD is an Islamic-oriented community-based organization that engaged in acts of intimidation and violence against some suspected drug dealers, gang leaders, and critics of PAGAD's violent vigilantism, including anti-PAGAD Muslim clerics, academics, and business leaders. PAGAD's earlier tactics of mass marches and drive-by shootings largely have been replaced by pipe-bomb attacks. There was no indication that police targeted PAGAD members for investigation because of their religious affiliation. Some religious communities believe that the Government is too lenient in regards to PAGAD.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable; however, there is a concern among some Christians about the perceived growing influence of Islam. Reports of violence perpetrated by PAGAD have fueled these concerns.

PAGAD portrays itself as a community organization opposed to crime, gangsterism, and drugs; however, it is known for its violent vigilantism (see Section II). PAGAD also claims to be a multifaith movement, although its orientation is Islamic and the vast majority of its members are Muslim. PAGAD is most active in the Western Cape, but also has branches elsewhere in the country. Surveys indicated that some two-thirds of Muslims supported PAGAD soon after its inception in 1995, but that figure has dropped significantly since; the vast majority of Muslims no longer support PAGAD. While PAGAD continues to lose support when it is linked to violent acts, it gains sympathy whenever high-profile incidents occur that are perceived by the Muslim community to have been acts of discrimination against Muslims.

PAGAD has been influenced heavily by Qibla, a radical Islamic-based political group created in 1979 to promote the establishment of an Islamic state in South Africa. Qibla is organized into cells in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and its membership is thought to number only a few hundred persons. Qibla leaders dominate the Islamic Unity Convention, an umbrella body formed in 1994 that claims to represent more than 200 small Muslim organizations.

Urban terrorism increased in the Western Cape during the period covered by this report. A trial was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report in the Cape High Court, in which 3 PAGAD members face 138 charges linked to urban terrorism in Cape Town in the past 5 years. On May 14, 2001, another trial began in Cape High Court against five PAGAD members accused of public violence, attempted murder, and murder, including the murder of gang leader Rashaad Staggie. The five members are being prosecuted for events that took place in 1996. The trial was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report. PAGAD also has been linked to plans to kill court presiding officers, prosecutors, and witnesses. In September 2000, magistrate Pieter Theron, who was hearing a case against PAGAD members, was killed in a drive-by shooting outside of his home in Cape Town. In December 2000, two prosecution witnesses in a case against PAGAD members were killed.

In January 1997, a mosque in Rustenberg was struck in a series of bombings that also struck a post office and general store and injured two persons. Three individuals were convicted of these attacks and in March 2001, were sentenced to 10 to 13 years in prison. They appealed the sentences, but the appeal was not heard by the end of the period covered by this report.

The trial of four suspects in the 1998 bombing of a synagogue in Wynberg has been postponed until September 2001.

There were occasional reports of killings linked to the continued practice of witchcraft in some rural areas. In the Northern Province, where traditional beliefs regarding witchcraft remain strong, officials reported dozens of killings of persons suspected of witchcraft. The Government has instituted educational programs to prevent such actions.

There are many official and unofficial bilateral and multilateral ecumenical contacts between the various churches. The largest of these is the South African Council of Churches (SACC), which represents the Methodist Church, the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican), various Lutheran and Presbyterian churches, and the Congregational Church, among others. The major traditional indigenous religions, most of the Afrikaans-language churches, and the Pentecostal and charismatic churches are not members of the SACC and usually have their own coordinating and liaison bodies. The Roman Catholic Church's relationship with other churches is becoming more relaxed, and it works closely with other churches on the socio-political front.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy have frequent contact with leaders and members of all religious communities in the country.

SUDAN

The Constitution, implemented in early 1999, provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely restricts this right in practice. The Government treats Islam as the state religion and has declared that it must inspire the country's laws, institutions, and policies.

The status of respect for religious freedom has not changed fundamentally in recent years. The Government continued to enforce numerous restrictions. Authorities continued to restrict the activities of Christians, followers of traditional indigenous religions, and other non-Muslims as well as some Islamic groups. Non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize, and apostasy, the conversion from Islam to Christianity, is a capital offense. The Government restricted large religious assemblies, and visas of Catholic priests were not renewed expeditiously. The Government's treatment of Islam as the state religion creates an atmosphere in which non-Muslims are treated as second class citizens. There continued to be reports that security forces harassed and arrested persons for religious beliefs and activities. During the ongoing civil war, the Government and government-supported forces have been responsible for indiscriminate bombings, the burning and looting of villages, and the killings, abductions, rapes, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of civilians, most of whom were Christians or practitioners of traditional indigenous religions.

Traditionally there have been amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, violence between rival Muslim groups resulted in the deaths of 26 persons.

The U.S. Government's efforts in the country have been limited by the non-resident status of U.S. diplomats prior to August 1998 and by the evacuation of the Embassy's American staff in August 1998. Nonresident American diplomats resumed visits to Khartoum in late February 2000. The U.S. Government has made it clear to the Government that the problem of religious freedom is one of the key impediments to an improvement in the relationship between Sudan and the U.S. The issue of religious freedom has been raised consistently with both the Government and the populace by high-level U.S. officials and U.S. Missions to international forums. In September 1999 and again in September 2000, the Secretary of State designated Sudan a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 1,556,108 square miles, and its population is 35,079,814. Sudan is a religiously mixed country, although Muslims have dominated national government institutions since independence. There are no accurate figures on the sizes of the country's religious populations. More than 75 percent of the population are Muslim, and adherents include numerous Arabic and non-Arabic groups. Muslims predominate in the north. There are sizable minorities of Christians and practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Most citizens in the south adhere to either Christianity or traditional indigenous religions. There are reliable reports that Christianity is growing rapidly in the south, particularly in areas outside of government control. There also is evidence that many new converts to Christianity continue to adhere to elements of traditional indigenous practices. The influx of 1 to 2 million southerners displaced by the war has brought sizable communities of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and Christians to the north. There also are small but influential and long established populations of Greek Orthodox and Coptic Rite Christians centered around Khartoum. Approximately 500,000 Coptic Christians live in the north. There are a few atheists and agnostics in the country, but exact figures are not available.

The Muslim population is almost entirely Sunni but is divided into many different groups. The most significant divisions occur along the lines of the Sufi brotherhood. Two popular brotherhoods, the Ansar and the Khatimia, are associated closely with the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), respectively.

Northern Muslims form a majority of the population, and government institutions are dominated by northern Muslims, who speak Arabic. The southern ethnic groups fighting the civil war (largely followers of traditional indigenous religions or Christians and largely of African origin) seek independence, autonomy, or some other form of regional self-determination from the north.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution, implemented in early 1999, provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely restricts this right in practice. The Government treats Islam as the state religion and has declared that it must inspire the country's laws, institutions, and policies. The Constitution states that "Shari'a and custom are the sources of legislation."

Religious organizations are subject to the 1994 Societies Registration Act. The Act theoretically allows churches to engage in a wide range of activities, but subjects churches to the same restrictions placed on nonreligious corporations. Religious groups, like all other organizations, must be registered in order to be recognized or to gather legally. The Government also requires that the construction of houses of worship be approved, and the Government continued to deny permission for the construction of Roman Catholic churches. Registered religious groups are exempt from most taxes. Nonregistered religious groups, on the other hand, find it impossible to construct a place of worship or to assemble legally. Registration reportedly is very difficult to obtain in practice, and the Government does not treat all groups equally in the approval of such registrations and licenses. The Government reportedly is working on new legislation to replace the Societies Registration Act, but has not yet invited the participation of religious groups in drafting the legislation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Authorities continued to restrict the activities of Christians, followers of traditional indigenous beliefs, and other non-Muslims, as well as certain Islamic groups.

While non-Muslims may convert to Islam, the 1991 Criminal Act makes apostasy (which includes conversion from Islam to another religion) punishable by death.

Muslims may proselytize freely in government-controlled areas, but non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize. Missionaries continued to do other work, and a wide range of Christian missionary groups operated in both government and rebel-controlled areas of the country. However, authorities sometimes harassed foreign missionaries and other religiously oriented organizations and delayed their requests for work permits and residence visas. For example, during the latter half of 2000, the Government refused to renew the visas of several Catholic missionaries who had been residents for long periods of time, forcing them to leave the country; the missionaries were able to re-apply for the visas while outside the country and they were subsequently granted. The Government generally is less restrictive of Christian groups that historically have had a presence in the country, including Copts, Roman Catholics, and Greek Orthodox, and is more restrictive of newer arrivals.

While the Government permits non-Muslims to participate in services in existing, authorized places of worship, the Government continued to deny permission for the construction of any Roman Catholic churches, although some other Christian groups have received permission. However, the Government permitted some makeshift structures to be used for Roman Catholic services.

There is a longstanding dispute between the Episcopal Church and the Government. In September 1999, the Episcopal Church stated that the Government had moved to seize a portion of the property on which the church office in Omdurman stands; however, the Government did not seize the property, and the parties continued negotiations to resolve the dispute during the period covered by this report. A government-run health care center had operated on the site since 1973. The Church claimed that it has a freehold title to the land, while the Government claimed that the land is leased. The Church claimed that the courts would not act independently of the Government in the case. The Church sent a memo to the Office of the President concerning the issue, but the President's Office replied that it did not have authority over the case because it was a state rather than a federal issue. At a June 19, 2000, court session, a decision on the matter was postponed until August 2000. There was no further information available on the case by the end of the period covered by this report.

In 1996 an Episcopal church was built in the Fetehab neighborhood of Omdurman. In 1998 local residents filed a case against the church for disturbances, and the authorities closed the church as a result. The case was forwarded to the Attorney General, but no decision had been issued on this matter by the end of the period covered by this report. Reportedly the Episcopal church tried to resolve the conflict by applying to state authorities for approval to build another church in a different location; however, the state authorities did not grant such approval.

The Khartoum State government in past years had razed some religious buildings and thousands of squatter dwellings around Khartoum, which largely were populated by displaced southerners, including large numbers of practitioners of tradi-

tional indigenous religions and Christians; however, this practice largely had ceased by the end of the period covered by this report. Earlier improvements in procedures to grant squatters legal title to land in other areas and to move squatters in advance of demolitions continued. In October 1999, the First Vice President directed that demolition of churches and other Christian facilities in Khartoum be suspended and that a committee be formed under the Second Vice President to review the issue. Some church officials indicated that the number of church and school demolitions in squatter areas declined, apparently because the replanning of squatter areas largely is complete. However, at the end of the period covered by this report, the Government was trying to take over the unused part of a Christian cemetery in Khartoum in order to build shops; the dispute remained unresolved.

Although the Government considers itself an Islamic government, restrictions often are placed on the religious freedoms of Muslims, particularly on those orders linked to opposition to the Government. Although in past years there were reports that Islamic orders such as the Ansar and the Khatimia regularly were denied permission to hold large public gatherings, these orders were allowed to meet as religious but not as political organizations during the period covered by this report.

Religious minority rights are not protected, and Islam is the state religion; this confers a status of second class citizenship on non-Muslim adherents. In government-controlled areas of the south, there continued to be credible evidence of favoritism towards Muslims and an unwritten policy of Islamization of public institutions, despite an official policy of local autonomy and federalism. Some non-Muslims lost their jobs in the civil service, the judiciary, and other professions; however, such occurrences were less frequent during the period covered by this report than in previous years. Few non-Muslim university graduates found government jobs. Some non-Muslim businessmen complained of petty harassment and discrimination in the awarding of government contracts and trade licenses. There also were reports that Muslims received preferential treatment for the limited services provided by the Government, including access to medical care.

The Government requires instruction in Islam in public schools in the north. In public schools in areas in which Muslims are not a majority, students have a choice of studying Islam or Christianity; however, Christian courses are not offered in the majority of public schools, ostensibly due to a lack of teachers or Christian students; in practice this means that many Christian students attend Islamic courses.

There were continued reports that Christian secondary school students in Khartoum were not allowed to continue their compulsory military service because they attended church. For example, in June 2000, approximately 100 Christian secondary students were not allowed to continue compulsory military service because they left their duties to attend religious services. Students who do not complete military service are not permitted to enter the University.

Sunday is not recognized as the Sabbath for Christians. Employers sometimes prevent Christians in the north from leaving work to worship.

Certain provisions of Islamic law as interpreted and applied by the Government, and many traditional practices as well, discriminate against women. In accordance with Islamic law, a Muslim woman has the right to hold and dispose of her own property without interference, and women are ensured inheritance from their parents. However, a daughter inherits half the share of a son, and a widow inherits a smaller percentage than do her children. It is much easier for men to initiate legal divorce proceedings than for women. Islamic family law applies to Muslims and not to those of other faiths, for whom religious or tribal laws apply. Although a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim, a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim unless he converts to Islam; however, this prohibition is not observed or enforced in areas of the south not controlled by the Government, nor among Nubans.

Children who have been abandoned or whose parentage is unknown, regardless of presumed religious origin, are considered by the State to be both citizens and Muslims and can be adopted only by Muslims. Non-Muslims may adopt only other non-Muslim children. No equivalent restriction is placed on the adoption by Muslims of orphans or other children. In accordance with Islamic law, children adopted by Muslims do not take the name of their adopted parents and are not automatic heirs to their property.

Various government bodies have decreed on different occasions that women must dress modestly according to Islamic standards, including wearing a head covering. In January 1999, the governor of Khartoum State announced that women in public places and government offices, and female students and teachers would be required to conform to what is considered an Islamic dress code. However, none of these decrees have been the subject of legislation. There was minimal enforcement of the dress code during the period covered by this report. Women often were seen in public wearing trousers or with their heads uncovered. Public Order police generally

only issued warnings for improper dress. In September 2000, the governor of Khartoum State issued a decree forbidding women from working in businesses that serve the public, such as hotels, restaurants, and gas stations. He defended the ban as necessary under Shari'a (Islamic law) to protect the dignity of women. At the end of the period covered by this report, the Constitutional Court was considering a case challenging the constitutionality of the decree.

In rebel-controlled areas, Christians, Muslims, and followers of traditional indigenous beliefs generally worship freely, although it appears that many of the region's Muslim residents have departed voluntarily over the years. The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) officially favors secular government; however, the movement is dominated by Christians, and local SPLM authorities often have a very close relationship with local Christian religious authorities. There is no evidence that this close relationship has resulted in a failure to respect the rights of practitioners of other religions.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were a few reports that security forces regularly harassed and at times used threats and violence against persons because of their religious beliefs and activities; however, such reports decreased during the period covered by this report.

In April 2001, Christian church authorities invited a German evangelist to address a rally in central Khartoum to celebrate Easter Mass and secured appropriate permits for the rally. On April 10, 2001, government authorities ordered church authorities to move the event to a venue that had insufficient space and was located on the outskirts of Khartoum in an area surrounded by mosques on the grounds that Islamic groups had made threats to disrupt the event. The leaders of the Episcopal Church and the Sudanese Council of Churches responded by sending a joint protest letter to the Government calling for the investigation of unfair treatment of Christians. On April 11, 2001, clashes broke out at the All Saints Cathedral between the police and demonstrators who were protesting the government order to move the event. Police fired at the protesters and used tear gas and truncheons to disperse them. There also were reports that hand grenades were used inside the Cathedral. Authorities arrested approximately 100 individuals, including Christian clergymen and charged them with public disturbance. After summary trials in April 2001, 53 demonstrators, including women and children, were flogged and some were imprisoned for up to 20 days.

In past years, Human Rights Watch reported that Islamic student militias operating under the protection of security forces abducted and tortured a number of student activists. During the period covered by this report, Islamic students harassed, beat, and otherwise abused non-Sudanese African students; part of the motivation for such acts appeared to be religious.

The Government officially exempts the 10 southern states, in which the population is mostly non-Muslim, from parts of the Criminal Act. The Act permits physical punishments, including lashings, amputations, and stonings, based on Shari'a (Islamic law). In a 1999 case involving ethnic clashes in the Darfur region in the west, an emergency court sentenced 10 persons to hanging and subsequent crucifixion. These sentences were not carried out by the end of the period covered by this report. In late 1999 and early 2000 in the north, the Government reportedly carried out amputations under Islamic law for the first time; there were reports that between five and ten cross amputations (right hand and left foot) were carried out during the period covered by this report. The Government carried out three amputations as punishment for violent crimes that resulted in death. All those sentenced to amputations reportedly were Muslims. There were no reports of court-ordered Islamic law punishments, other than lashings, in government-controlled areas of the south. The act legally can be applied in the south, if the state assemblies approve it. Fear of the imposition of Islamic law is one of the factors that has fueled support for the civil war among opposition forces in the south.

In June 2000, approximately 100 Christian secondary school students who had been training at a police unit in Jebel Awlia province in Khartoum State, said that they were abused physically and insulted by the police during the exercise. They claimed to be among 231 Christians out of 1,200 students at the camp. It was unclear if these students were abused because they were Christian, and the national service coordination office in Khartoum State reportedly denied that there was a problem at the training camps. The students were not allowed to continue their compulsory military education because they left their duties to attend church.

Unlike in previous years, Catholic priests did not report that they routinely were stopped and harassed by police during the period covered by this report. Security forces detained persons because of their religious beliefs and activities; however, such detentions on religious grounds occurred less frequently during the period cov-

ered by this report than in previous years. Generally detentions based nominally on religion were of limited duration; because the practice of religion is not technically illegal, detainees could not be held formally on religious grounds indefinitely. Although in the past there were reports that the Government resorted to accusing, at times falsely, those arrested for religious reasons of other crimes, including common crimes and national security crimes, which resulted in prolonged detention, there were no reports of such occurrences during the period covered by this report.

In December 2000, the Government arrested and detained 65 leading members of the Takfeer and Hijra group following an attack on a rival group's worshippers (see Section III); most of the individuals remained in detention and had not been tried by the end of the period covered by this report.

In September 2000, security forces briefly detained 25 women who participated in a National Democratic Women's Association demonstration protesting the governor of Khartoum's decree prohibiting women from working in hotels, restaurants, and gas stations.

Since the civil war resumed in 1983, an estimated 2 million persons have been killed in the violence or have died from the effects of the drought; 4 million have been displaced internally as a result of fighting between the Government and insurgents in the south. Despite limited ceasefires, the civil war continued during the period covered by this report, and all sides involved in the fighting were responsible for abuses in violation of humanitarian norms. Government and government-supported forces in particular were responsible for the majority of the killings, abductions, rapes, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of civilians, and for the burning and looting of villages. There is a religious aspect to the civil war: the Government is dominated by northern Muslims, while the southern ethnic groups fighting the civil war largely are followers of traditional indigenous religions or Christians. The Government has declared a "jihad" (Muslim holy war) against the southern rebels. One of the major factors in the continuation of the war is the Government refusal to agree to the SPLM's demand for a unified secular state.

As part of the civil war, the Government has engaged in a program of high altitude, indiscriminate bombing of southern areas, particularly in the states of Equatoria, Western Upper Nile, and the Nuba Mountains. The bombings hit schools, medical facilities, markets, and civilian buildings in these areas inhabited primarily by Christians and practitioners of traditional African religions. For example, in April 2001, Sudanese Air Force bombers attacked an airstrip in the Nuba Mountains and narrowly missed hitting a plane carrying Bishop Macram Max Gassis of El Obeid Diocese in the central part of the country.

The forced abduction of women and children and the taking of slaves, particularly in war zones, and their transport to parts of central and northern Sudan, continued. The victims in part were targeted because of their religious beliefs. There were credible reports that Baggara raiders, armed and reportedly supported by the Government, attacked villages in the Bahr al Ghazal region, taking a number of persons, almost exclusively women and children, as slaves. The victims in the villages were largely Christians or practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Militia and Baggara raids occurred during the period covered by this report. Although the Government's Commission to End the Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWAC) pledged to end slavery in the country, raids nevertheless continued.

In July 2000, at a bus station in Hilla Kuku, a Catholic worker was abducted by unidentified men, reportedly security personnel, and taken to an unidentified house. He was kept in a chair, with his hands tied behind his back, and questioned about church activities. He was released after dark but warned not to discuss the incident.

Forced Religious Conversion

Some children from Christian and other non-Muslim families, captured and sold into slavery, were converted forcibly to Islam.

The Popular Defense Forces (PDF) trainees, including non-Muslims, were indoctrinated in the Islamic faith. In prisons and juvenile detention facilities, government officials and government-supported Islamic non-governmental organizations (NGO's) pressured and offered inducements to non-Muslim inmates to convert. Some persons in the government-controlled camps for internally displaced persons reported that they were subject to forced labor and at times pressured to convert to Islam. Children, including non-Muslim children, in camps for vagrant minors were required to study the Koran, and there was pressure on non-Muslims to convert to Islam. There were credible reports that some boys in vagrant camps and juvenile homes have undergone forced circumcision.

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

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Traditionally, there have been amicable relations between the various religious communities. However, in December 2000, supporters of the outlawed Takfeer and Hijra Muslim groups attacked a rival Muslim group's worshipers at a Sunni mosque in Omdurman during Ramadan prayers, killing 26 persons and injuring 40 others (see Section II).

There are reports that Islamic NGO's in war zones withhold other services, such as medical and food aid, from the needy unless they convert to Islam. There also were reports that Christian NGO's used their services to pressure persons to convert to Christianity.

Leaders of religious communities meet informally to discuss community relations.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government's efforts in the country have been limited by the non-resident status of U.S. diplomats prior to August 1998 and by the evacuation of the Embassy's American staff in August 1998. Nonresident American diplomats resumed visits to Khartoum in late February 2000. Nonetheless the U.S. Government and the U.S. Embassy, whose American staff is based in Nairobi and Cairo, have continued to make efforts to encourage respect for religious freedom. The U.S. Government has made it clear to the Government that the problem of religious freedom is one of the key impediments to developing a more positive relationship between the country and the United States. The Embassy consistently raised the issue at all levels of government, including with the Foreign Minister. When present in Khartoum, representatives of the Embassy regularly meet with leaders of the religious communities in the country.

The Embassy and the Department of State forcefully raised religious freedom issues publicly in press statements and at international forums, including the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

In September 1999, and again in September 2000, the Secretary of State designated Sudan a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

SWAZILAND

There are no formal constitutional provisions for freedom of religion; however, the Government generally respects freedom of religion in practice, although there are a few restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. On two occasions, the authorities cancelled prayer meetings on political grounds and on one occasion forcibly dispersed a community prayer service. In addition school authorities refused to allow six students to attend school on the grounds that their beliefs as members of Jehovah's Witnesses would incite other students to be disrespectful; the students were later reinstated by a court order.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 6,700 square miles and its population is approximately 1,100,000. Christianity is the dominant religion. Zionism is a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship and is the prominent religion in rural areas. A large Roman Catholic presence, including churches, schools, and other infrastructure, continues to flourish. It is estimated that the population is 40 percent Zionist, 20 percent Roman Catholic, and 10 percent Islamic, with the remaining 30 percent divided between Anglican, Methodist, Baha'i, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jewish, and other beliefs. Followers of Islam and the Baha'i Faith generally are located in urban areas. There are few atheists in the country.

Missionaries inspired much of the country's early development and still play a role in rural development. Missionaries mostly are western Christians, including Baptists, Mormons, evangelicals, and other Christians. Baha'is are one of the most active non-Christian groups in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

There are no formal constitutional provisions for freedom of religion; however, the Government generally respects freedom of religion in practice, although authorities on occasion disrupted or cancelled prayer meetings.

New religious groups or churches are expected to register with the Government upon organizing in the country. In order to be considered organized, a religious group or church must demonstrate either possession of substantial cash reserves or financial support from outside religious groups with established ties to western or eastern religions. For indigenous religious groups or churches, authorities consider demonstration of a proper building, a pastor or religious leader, and a congregation as sufficient to grant organized status. However, there is no law describing the organizational requirements of a religious group or church. While organized churches are exempt from paying taxes, they are not considered tax-deductible charities. All religions are recognized unofficially.

Portions of the capital city are zoned specifically for church buildings of all denominations. Those religious groups that wish to construct new buildings may purchase a plot and apply for the required building permits. The Government had not restricted any religion with financial means from building a place of worship; non-Christian groups sometimes experience minor delays in obtaining permits from the Government to build residences.

While the Government primarily observes Christian holidays, the monarchy (and by extension the Government) supports many religious activities in addition to Easter and Christmas. For example, the royal family occasionally attends evangelical programs.

The Government neither restricts nor formally promotes interfaith dialog, and it does not provide formal mechanisms for religions to reconcile differences. Churches have access to the courts as private entities.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Followers of all religious faiths generally are free to worship without government interference or restriction; however, on August 26 and September 3, 2000, police cancelled two prayer meetings on the grounds that the meetings had political overtones.

During the period covered by this report, there was a dispute regarding the reinstatement of six children who are members of Jehovah's Witnesses at a primary school. An April 13, 2001, order by the High Court reinstated the six students, who were expelled for not obeying school rules and regulations because of their beliefs as Jehovah's Witnesses. The students were allowed to return to school, and parents and school authorities were addressing the issue.

Non-Christian groups sometimes experience minor delays in obtaining permits from the Government.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On September 9, 2000, police used force to disperse a community prayer service just as an opposition leader rose to address the meeting. Police fired tear gas canisters and rubber bullets into the crowd; 2 individuals were wounded by rubber bullets and 60 persons were treated for minor injuries.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious diversity is respected. Five different denominations maintain adjoining properties peacefully. There was no public conflict among faiths during the period covered by this report.

The Christian churches are well organized and are divided into three groups: the Council of Churches, the League of Churches, and the Conference of Churches. Each of these bodies represents all of the Christian denominations in the country, and they primarily engage in producing common statements on political issues and sharing radio production facilities, or engage in common rural development and missionary strategies. Each organization has strong public opinions, which sometimes differ from one another; however, on several occasions, they have come together to

address common issues, such as a constitutional amendment allowing for freedom of religion.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy maintains contact and good relations with the various religious organizations.

TANZANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, subject to measures that it claims are necessary to ensure public order and safety; however, there were a few limits on this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Some urban Muslim groups are sensitive to perceived discrimination in government hiring and law enforcement practices.

Generally there are stable relations between the various religious communities; however, there is some tension between Muslims and Christians, and some tension between secular and fundamentalist Muslims.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 364,900 square miles and its population is approximately 35 million. Religious leaders and sociologists generally believe that the country's population is 30 to 40 percent Christian, 30 to 40 percent Muslim, and that the remainder is comprised of practitioners of other faiths, traditional indigenous religions, and atheists. Zanzibar, which accounts for 2.5 percent of the country's population, is 98 percent Muslim. Current statistics on religious demography are unavailable, as religious surveys were eliminated from all government census reports after 1967. The Christian population is comprised of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses. Between 80 to 90 percent of the Muslim population is Sunni, with the remainder comprised of several Shi'a groups.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country, including Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Mormon, Anglican, and Muslim.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, subject to measures that it claims are necessary to ensure public order and safety; however, there were a few limits on this right.

The Government requires that religious organizations register with the Registrar of Societies at the Home Affairs Ministry. In order to register, religious organizations must have at least 10 followers and must provide a constitution, the resumes of their leaders, and a letter of recommendation from their district commissioner. Groups no longer are required to provide three letters of recommendation from the leaders of registered Christian churches or from registered mosques; however, some Muslim groups claim that they still are required to submit a letter of recommendation from BAKWATA, the National Muslim Council of Tanzania. There were no reports that the Government refused the registration of any group.

Prior to 2000, religious groups were exempt from paying taxes because they were presumed to be nonprofit organizations. The Government discovered in 1998 that some religious groups were importing goods duty-free and then selling them for a profit and began requiring these groups to pay taxes. After successfully identifying these organizations, the Government allowed legitimate religious groups to order goods internationally without paying duty, provided that they receive an exemption certificate from the Tanzania Revenue Authority.

Customary or statutory law in both civil and criminal matters governs Christians. Muslims may apply either customary law or Islamic law in civil matters; Islamic law is applicable only in Zanzibar. Zanzibar's court system generally parallels the mainland's legal system but retains Islamic courts to adjudicate cases of Muslim

family law, such as divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Islamic courts only adjudicate cases involving Muslims.

Missionaries are permitted to enter the country freely, particularly if proselytizing is ancillary to other religious activities. Citizens are permitted to go abroad for pilgrimages and other religious practices.

In 1998 the Government dissolved its national and regional parole boards after complaints that they did not include Muslim members, even though the majority of the prison population is Muslim. The boards were reconstituted in February 1999 with a more religiously diverse membership. The results of the Government's investigation into allegations that the National Muslim Council was receiving money from abroad were not made public by the end of the period covered by this report.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The law prohibits preaching or distribution of materials that are considered inflammatory and represent a threat to the public order. In July 2000, the Government banned the publication and distribution of a book by a Muslim academic on the grounds that it was inflammatory. The book, titled "The Mwembechai Killings," described Muslim grievances against the Government and provided the author's version of events surrounding the killings of three Muslim protesters in 1998 in the Mwembechai area of Dar es Salaam. During the period covered by this report, urban Muslims distributed videotapes of the Mwembechai riots to document perceived human rights abuses; these videotapes were outlawed by the Government for being incendiary.

The Government has banned religious organizations from involvement in politics, and politicians are banned from using language designed to incite one religious group against another or to encourage religious groups to vote for certain political parties. In July 2000, Parliament passed a law that imposes fines and jail time on political parties that campaign in houses of worship or educational facilities. In September 2000, BAKWATA closed a school in Singida for holding meetings to campaign for the Civic United Front (CUF) on its grounds. The school was reopened, and the persons who were involved in the campaigning were expelled from the administration of the school.

The Government does not designate religion on any passports or records of vital statistics; however, it does require an individual's religion to be stated on police reports, school registration forms, and applications for medical care.

Government policy forbids discrimination against any individual on the basis of religious beliefs or practices; however, individual government officials are alleged to favor persons who share the same religion in the conduct of business. The Muslim community claims to be disadvantaged in terms of its representation in the civil service, government, and parastatal institutions, in part because both colonial and early post-independence administrations refused to recognize the credentials of traditional Muslim schools. As a result, there is broad Muslim resentment of certain advantages that Christians are perceived to enjoy in employment and educational opportunities. Muslim leaders have complained that the number of Muslim students invited to enroll in government-run schools still was not equal to the number of Christians. In turn Christians criticize what they perceive as lingering effects of undue favoritism accorded to Muslims in appointments, jobs, and scholarships by former President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim. Christian leaders agree that the Muslim student population in institutions of higher learning is disproportionately low; however, they blame this condition on historical circumstances rather than discrimination.

The Government failed to respond to growing tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities (see Section III). The Government recognized that a problem exists, but it chose not to take action. The Government cancelled several meetings with Muslim and Christian leaders aimed at improving relations between the two communities. Even senior Muslim officials in the Government appear unwilling to address the problem, apart from general criticism of those who would foment religious conflict. In 1999 President Mkapa met with leaders of the Muslim community at a Dar es Salaam mosque to listen to their grievances and propose solutions; however, urban Muslim leaders claim that no action has been taken to address their concerns.

The overall situation for women is less favorable in Zanzibar, which has a majority Muslim population, than on the mainland. Although women generally are not discouraged from seeking employment outside the home, women of Zanzibar, and on many parts of the mainland, face discriminatory restrictions on inheritance and ownership of property because of concessions by the Government and courts to customary and Islamic law. While provisions of the Marriage Act provide for certain inheritance and property rights for women, the application of customary, Islamic,

or statutory law depends on the lifestyle and stated intentions of the male head of household. The courts have upheld discriminatory inheritance claims, primarily in rural areas. Under Zanzibari law, unmarried women under the age of 21 who become pregnant are subject to 2 years' imprisonment.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Prior to the October 2000 elections, government officials called on political candidates to avoid using religion as a campaign issue and urged the public to reject religiously-oriented campaigns. The CUF party, perceived by many voters as being the "party of Muslims," apparently lost ground on the mainland due to the heavy emphasis that its candidates placed on religious issues. In January 2001, a demonstration on Pemba, which is 98 percent Muslim, turned violent and led to the deaths of at least 23 protestors, and also sparked an outburst of religious enmity. Police killed two persons, including one imam. Following the demonstration, there were reports of isolated cases of harassment of individuals who were perceived as supporters of radical Islam, including the alleged forcible shaving of beards of certain Muslims who had been detained.

In July 1999, police used tear gas and clubs to disperse a peaceful demonstration by Muslims protesting a ban on Muslim school uniforms by certain public schools. Muslim groups report that subsequently they were allowed to challenge and overturn the bans through use of the judicial system, which ruled that certain traditional religious attire (such as hijab headdress) was permitted by law in all public schools.

In September 1999, police arrested a popular Muslim leader for inciting his followers against other religions. A week later, the police canceled a planned Muslim demonstration to protest his arrest. In October 1999, the Muslim leader was charged with seditious intent and denied bail. There was no further information about this case at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While Muslim-Christian relations remained generally stable, tensions rose due to urban Muslim groups' claims of discrimination in government hiring and law enforcement practices (see Section II). Rural Muslim groups do not appear to share urban Muslims' concerns to the same extent. There also were other signs of increased religious tensions between Christians and Muslims.

There were signs of increasing tension between secular and fundamentalist Muslims, as the latter feel that the former have joined with the Government for monetary and other benefits. The fundamentalist Muslims accuse the Government of being a Christian institution, and Muslims in power as being interested only in safeguarding their positions. Fundamentalist Muslims severely criticized secular Muslims who drink alcohol or marry Christian women. Muslim fundamentalists attempted, unsuccessfully, to introduce Muslim traditional dress into the national school system. Fundamentalist groups also have exhorted their followers to vote only for Muslim candidates.

In 2000 a University of Dar es Salaam organization conducted a study of the possible role of religion in impeding the country's future development as a multiparty democracy. The organization, Research, Education and Democracy in Tanzania (REDET), which consists of a number of academics—Muslim and Christian—surveyed the public's views of religion as a potential societal faultline. The results of the study were not published by the end of the period covered by this report.

An interdenominational religious council periodically meets to discuss issues of mutual concern, such as the recent violence in Zanzibar. The council is comprised of Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim representatives. The Muslim representative belongs to the BAKWATA; several urban Muslim leaders and a majority of urban Muslims believe that the BAKWATA is a government-imposed watchdog organization.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

In 2001 the U.S. Embassy sponsored a series of lectures and town hall meetings in Zanzibar that encouraged discussion of tolerance and the role of religion in a democratic society.

TOGO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 21,006 square miles and its population is 4,629,000. According to statistics published by the Ministry of Tourism, the population is approximately 22 percent Catholic, 12 percent Sunni Muslim, and 7 percent Protestant. The remaining 59 percent of the population consists of followers of other faiths, including traditional indigenous religions. Many converts to the larger faiths continue to practice some rituals of traditional indigenous religions. The number of atheists in the country is unknown but is thought to be small. Most Muslims live in the central and northern regions.

Missionary groups active in the country represent Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government establishes requirements for recognition of religious organizations outside the three main faiths—Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam, which are recognized officially. Applications must be submitted to the Interior Ministry's Division of Civil Security. A religious organization must submit its statutes, a statement of doctrine, bylaws, names and addresses of executive board members, the pastor's diploma, a contract, a site map, and a description of its financial situation. The Interior Ministry issues official recognition. The Civil Security Division also has enforcement responsibilities when there are problems or complaints associated with a religious organization.

The Government recognizes 97 religious groups, of which most are smaller Protestant groups and some new Muslim groups. Members of those religions not officially recognized are permitted to practice their religion, but have no legal standing. In 2000, 38 religious groups submitted applications to the government requesting official recognition. Since 1991, 317 groups have applied for recognition. There was no information available regarding the criteria for recognition, the number of rejections, or details about the groups that had been rejected. If an application provides insufficient information for recognition to be granted, the application often remains open indefinitely.

There are no special requirements for foreign missionary groups, which are subject to the same registration requirements as other groups.

Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools are common.

The Government-owned television station, TV Togo, and the Ministry of Communication sponsored a program during the period covered by this report to foster Islamic-Christian understanding.

In January 2001, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, a Protestant, once again invited Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant religious leaders to an ecumenical prayer service to commemorate the anniversary of his military takeover. Eyadema has invited these religious leaders to this service for at least 10 years. For the third year in a row, the Catholic Church declined the invitation to attend the "Day of National

Liberation” service, stating that it is inappropriate to hold a worship service in a government building.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Constitution prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion and states explicitly that “no political party should identify itself with a region, an ethnic group, or a religion.” Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims occupy positions of authority in local and the central government.

According to an international NGO, the authorities established an interministerial commission in early 2000 to investigate the activities of all religious groups in the country whose mode of worship allegedly harms the welfare of society. The Prime Minister expressed concern about the methods of worship by religious groups that beat cymbals and drums at night; however, the Government took no measures to restrict these groups during the period covered by this report.

The 17-member National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), elected by the National Assembly, includes Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant representatives. The CNDH hears appeals by religious organizations that the Government has disallowed principally for disturbing the peace. For example, in past years, Jehovah’s Witnesses were not allowed to practice because they would not take an oath to the national flag; however, this restriction was eased in 1998.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable. Members of different faiths regularly invite one another to their respective ceremonies. Intermarriage across religious lines is common.

The Christian Council was founded in 1978 to address common issues among Protestant denominations. The Council comprises the Assemblies of God, Protestant Methodist, the Baptist Convention, Pentecostal churches, Seventh-Day Adventist, Lutheran, and Evangelical Presbyterian denominations. The Council continues to debate whether to expand its membership to include other Protestant organizations. Catholics and Protestants collaborate frequently through the Biblical Alliance.

Under the leadership of the Archbishop of Lome, the Catholic Church continued to refrain from delivering political sermons praising President Eyadema. The Archbishop’s predecessor had used the pulpit to praise the President, but such sermons alienated the congregation, which called for the former Archbishop’s dismissal.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

UGANDA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions on religious freedom.

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; however, on one occasion local officials forcibly disbanded a church group. Several religious organizations that were disbanded forcibly in April and May 2000 after members of a religious group killed over 1,000 citizens remained disbanded at the end of the period covered by this report. Unlike in the previous reporting period, there were no reports that security officials harassed or detained Muslims.

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and no religious group actively impinges upon the rights of others to worship; however, the backlash from the killing of over 1,000 citizens in the spring of 2000 at the hands of a religious group resulted in negative public attitudes toward Christian groups that are viewed as cults.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 146,556 square miles, and its population is approximately 23 million. Christianity is the majority religion, and its adherents constitute approximately 66 percent of the population. Muslims account for approximately 16 percent of the population. A variety of other religions, including traditional indigenous religions, Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, and Judaism are practiced freely and, combined, make up about 18 percent of the population. Among the Christian groups, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches claim approximately the same number of followers, accounting for perhaps 95 percent of the nation's professed Christians. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baptist Church, the Unification Church, and the Pentecostal Church, among others, are active. Muslims are mainly Sunni, although there also are Shi'a followers of the Aga Khan among the Asian community. Several branches of Hinduism also are represented among the Asian community. There are few atheists.

In many areas, particularly in rural settings, some religions tend to be syncretistic. Deeply held traditional indigenous beliefs commonly are blended into established religious rites or observed alongside such rites, particularly in areas that are predominantly Christian.

Missionary groups of several denominations are present and active in the country, including the Pentecostal Church, the Baptist Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Muslims and adherents of other minority religions occupy positions of authority in local and central government.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions.

All religious organizations are required to register with the Nongovernmental Organizations Board. The Government continued to refuse to grant registration to the World Last Message Warning Church, due to its leader's pending criminal charges and continuing suspicions following the 2000 cult killings of over 1,000 citizens. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such registration to any other religious organization.

Missionary groups face no particular restrictions on their activity. Foreign missionary groups, like foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), must register with the Government. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant registration to any foreign missionary groups.

Permits also are necessary for the construction of facilities, including religious facilities. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such permits to any religious organization.

Private Koranic and Christian schools are common. There is no religious instruction in public schools.

Prisoners are given the opportunity to pray on days appropriate to their faith. Muslim prisoners usually are released from work duties during the month of Ramadan.

On February 7, 2001, the Electoral Commission announced that the date of the presidential election would be moved from March 6 to March 7 because of the Muslim Eid holiday on March 6; the date later was changed to March 12 due to problems with voter registration.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On August 16, 2000, the Jinja Resident District Commissioner ordered the closure of the United Methodist Church in Jinja Town following allegations that the church forbade members from seeking medical treatment. On August 13, 2000, a church member suffering from asthma died, reportedly after 3 days of fasting and refusing medication.

Some local governments have restricted the hours of operations of religious organizations that are viewed as cults, for example, prohibiting nighttime prayer meetings. The Government largely has ignored calls for these churches to be shut down and their followers returned to mainstream churches. However, in the wake of discoveries in March, April, and May 2000 that over 1,000 citizens had been killed by members of a religious group, several religious organizations were disbanded forc-

ibly. In early April 2000, following allegations that the Revival Pentecostal Church in Nseko village, Kasangati, allowed youths to engage in sexual relationships, the deputy Resident District Commissioner (RDC) closed the church. In mid-April 2000, police in Kasese district banned the activities of a church group based in Hima public school, Busongora. On May 19, 2000, the Bushenyi resident district commissioner ordered the closure of the Church of the Servants of the Eucharistic Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which allegedly was operating in the guise of a vocational school. None of these churches were reopened by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Government continued to refuse to grant registration to the World Last Message Warning Church, due to its leader's pending criminal charges and continuing suspicions following the 2000 cult killings of over 1,000 citizens.

Unlike in the first half of 2000, there were no reports during the period covered by this report that local officials dispersed meetings of religious groups.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In August 2000, police in Rukungiri district arrested Innocent Bitungwabariho, a leader of the Jesus Christ the King of Salvation church. Bitungwabariho allegedly confined his family to their house for 5 years in order to prevent them from being exposed to sin. On August 22, he appeared before court in Rukungiri district on charges of participating in an unlawful assembly, being idle and disorderly, and child neglect under section 15, sub-section (I) of the Penal Code Act. Bitungwabariho remained in detention, and his case was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

On August 7, 2000, Nabi Besweri Kiswabuli, the apostle of the Issa Massiya religious group in Iganga district, was charged with assaulting and injuring Daniel Tsubira, a former follower. The alleged assault occurred on March 2, 1999, in Bubaga village, Busiki county. Kiswabuli and others reportedly attacked Tsubira when he returned to Massiya Camp to retrieve his belongings. The case was pending in court at the end of the period covered by this report.

On July 18, 2000, Wilson Bushara, leader of the World Last Message Warning Church, and 17 of his followers were arrested and charged with defilement, rape, abduction, and theft. The group reportedly defiled and raped a 15-year-old girl between August and September 18, 1999. On November 23, 2000, the Director of Public Prosecutions ordered that Bushara and his followers be transferred from the Buganda Magistrates' Court to Luweero where the offenses allegedly were committed. On May 13, 2001, the Kampala High Court dismissed the charge of defilement against Bushara due to lack of evidence; however, the other charges and cases against his followers were pending before the Luweero district Magistrates' Court at the end of the period covered by this report.

Following the killings on March 16, 2000, of more than 500 followers of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God and the discovery of mass graves of approximately 500 other persons on properties in Kanungu belonging to the group, the Government launched investigations of numerous religious groups. Three groups were disbanded forcibly and one religious leader was arrested. On March 29, 2000, former Rukungiri Assistant Resident District Commissioner (ARDC) Rev. Francis Mutazindwa was arrested for failing to act on information about the activities of the Kanungu cult while he was the ARDC. He was released on bond on April 29, 2000, pending further investigation. In December 2000, the Government appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate the Kanungu killings and the operation of other religious-based NGO's; however, due to the Ministry of Internal Affairs' lack of funds, the Commission's investigation has been delayed.

As of the end of the period covered by this report, 38 members of the Islamic Tabliq group who were arrested in 1995 on treason charges remained in detention pending trial. The Government maintains that the group members are terrorists, but some members have said that they are held for religious reasons. The group was offered amnesty under a law signed in January 2000; however, the 38 members refused amnesty and chose to stand trial. Under the amnesty, 28 other Tabliq Muslims arrested on the same charges were pardoned and released in 2000.

There were no developments in the May 2000 case involving five members of the Kisaaba Redeemed Church in Kayunga, Mukono district—Benon Kaye, Monica Isabirye, Ezeza Kisakye Lukwago, Catherine Nagujja, and Willinstone Nagenda—who were arrested and charged with causing the death of a church member by denying him medical treatment. Kaye and Isabirye were released on bail, and the other members were freed.

There were no developments in the May 2000 case involving five members of the Mulungomu Full Gospel Church in Luweero—John Mwebaza, Florence Mirembe, Fred Mwesigwa, Sarah Mugabi, and Geoffrey Beyongera—who were arrested after

reportedly telling their followers to fast and sell their property. The five remained in custody at Luzira prison at the end of the period covered by this report.

Unlike in the previous reporting period, there were no reports that security officials harassed or detained Muslims.

Although there have been reports from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that some Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) troops may have targeted Catholic clergy, subsequent reports from the DRC indicate that UPDF troops were not involved in such incidents.

On October 1, 2000, in Aruu county, Kitgum district, LRA rebels ambushed and killed Father Raffaele di Bari, an Italian Roman Catholic priest, as he traveled on a road southwest of Kitgum. Bari was the parish priest of Pajule Catholic Church and had lived in the country since 1959. Bari was not targeted because he was a priest.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and no religious group actively impinges upon the right of others to worship. However, the backlash from the spring 2000 killing of over 1,000 citizens at the hands of a religious group resulted in negative public attitudes toward fringe Christian groups. Some officials of "mainstream" Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim religious organizations have called for the closure of Christian churches, which are viewed as cults.

Early in 2001, the heads of the Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, and Islamic faiths organized an Inter-Religious Council; however, the organization's structure had not been determined by the end of the period covered by this report. The purpose of the organization is to strengthen inter-religious dialogue among the main religious groups and to advocate on social issues of concern to all groups.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ZAMBIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 290,586 square miles and its population is estimated at 10,285,631. Approximately 85 percent of the population are Christian; 5 percent are Muslim; 5 percent adhere to other faiths, including Hinduism and the Baha'i Faith; and 5 percent are atheist.

The Christian faith was introduced by foreign missionary groups in the 1890's. The majority of indigenous persons, spread throughout the country, either are Roman Catholic or Protestant. Currently there is an upsurge of new Pentecostal churches, commonly known as the "born again" churches, which have attracted many young persons into their ranks.

Muslims are concentrated in certain parts of the country where citizens of Asian origin have settled along the railroad line from Lusaka to Livingstone, in Chipata, and in the eastern province. Most citizens of Asian origin are Muslims, although Hindus constitute a small percentage. A limited number of indigenous persons also are Muslim.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country and include the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Church of God.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

Although a 1996 amendment to the Constitution declared the country a Christian nation while providing for freedom of religion in practice, the Government generally respects the right of all faiths to worship freely.

There are governmental controls that require the registration of religious groups. The Government approves all applications for registration from religious groups without discrimination. There were no reports that the Government rejected any religious groups that attempted to register or obtain licenses.

There were no reports that foreign missionary groups faced any special requirements or restrictions.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Such instruction is conducted in the dominant Christian religion; however, it is not mandatory and students may be excused from it. Religious instruction in Islam and other faiths is conducted in private schools owned and controlled by those faiths.

Some religious organizations operate radio stations and television networks.

An office for religious affairs at the level of deputy minister in the President's Office at State House is responsible for dealing with issues that pertain to religion and worship, and to the promotion of state-church understanding and interfaith dialog.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Zambia Episcopal Conference, the Christian Council of Zambia, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia were criticized by individuals, including some members of the Government, for publicly opposing efforts to amend the Constitution to enable the President to seek a third term of office. A Catholic bishop was criticized by supporters of the President when he read a pastoral letter criticizing the third-term campaign during a church service. The Government subsequently apologized to the bishop for this behavior. In spite of the criticism of these churches for taking a stand on a political issue, these organizations were able to organize activities freely to mobilize public opinion on the third-term issue.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities.

Leaders of various ecumenical movements, such as the Zambia Episcopal Conference, the Christian Council of Zambia, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, hold regular meetings to promote mutual understanding and interfaith dialog, and to discuss national issues.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ZIMBABWE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a law that criminalizes purporting to practice witchcraft and accusing persons of practicing witchcraft reportedly was viewed as restrictive by some practitioners of indigenous religions.

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 relations between the various religious communities contributed to religious freedom. The Government and the religious communities historically have had good relations.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 240,122 square miles, and its population is estimated at 11,342,521. Between 60 and 70 percent of the population belong to the mainstream Christian denominations, with between 2 and 3 million persons identifying themselves as Roman Catholic. There are no reliable statistics on the exact number of Christian churches or religious movements in the country. The evangelical denominations, mostly Pentecostal churches, and Apostolic groups are the fastest growing religious groups in the country. They appeal to large numbers of disillusioned members from the established churches who reportedly are attracted by promises of miracles and messages of hope at a time of social and economic stress. There is a small Muslim population in the country, estimated at less than 1 percent. The remainder of the population consists of practitioners of Greek Orthodoxy, Jews, practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and indigenous syncretistic religions that mix Christianity and traditional African culture and beliefs, and a small number of Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, and atheists.

The dominance of Christianity dates to the early contact of Portuguese traders and Jesuit priests with Africans in the region in the late 1500's. The Jesuits established churches and educational institutions in the Zambezi Valley at that time. Several centuries later, Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Dutch Reformed, and Salvation Army missionaries began to compete aggressively for territorial and spiritual monopolies throughout the country, resulting in "areas of interest" for each of these churches. As a result, many persons identify with the Christian denomination that has had the longest historical connection to their area. President Robert Mugabe is a Roman Catholic who professes to practice his faith actively, and many of those who make up the elite of society tend to be associated with one of the established Christian churches, especially the Anglican and Methodist churches.

Due to the country's colonial and apartheid-like history, the vast majority of the country's black population was prevented from attending government schools, which were restricted to white students. Christian mission schools taught the few blacks who were able to obtain a formal education. Consequently the vast majority of the country's liberation war leadership, who later became the Government's senior officials, were trained by Christian educators.

The Muslim community consists primarily of South Asian immigrants (Indian and Pakistani), migrants from other southern and eastern African countries (Mozambique and Malawi), and a very small number of North African and Middle Eastern immigrants. There are mosques located in several large urban areas, and there are a small number of mosques in rural areas. There are 12 mosques in the capital Harare. The Muslim community generally has been very insular; however, in recent years, the Islamic community has begun proselytizing among the majority black indigenous population with increasing success.

A variety of indigenous churches and groups have emerged from the mainstream Christian churches over the years. Some, such as the Zimbabwe Assembly of God (ZAOG), continue to adhere strictly to Christian beliefs; in fact, they oppose the espousal of traditional religions. Other indigenous groups, such as the Seven Apostles, combine elements of established Christian beliefs with some beliefs based on traditional African culture and religion. These latter groups tend to be centered on a prophetic figure, with members of the congregation identifying themselves as "apostles." These church members wear long white robes and head coverings. Many of these churches date from the early 1920's, when there was widespread racial and religious segregation. Many of the founders of African indigenous churches broke away from Christian missionary churches, and some of their teachings incorporate what has become known as "black consciousness." To a large extent, these churches grew out of the Christian churches' failure to adapt to traditional African culture and religion. These indigenous churches have proliferated as a result of splits among the followers of the different "prophets."

Many persons continue to believe, in varying degrees, in traditional indigenous religions. These persons may attend worship in a westernized Christian church on Sundays but consult with traditional healers during the week. Belief in traditional healers spans both the rural and urban areas. Traditional healers are very common and are licensed and regulated by the Zimbabwe National African Traditional Healers' Association (ZINATHA). Traditional indigenous religions remain rooted deeply.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a law that criminalizes both purporting to practice witchcraft and accusing persons of practicing witchcraft reportedly was viewed as restrictive by some practitioners of indigenous religions. There is no state religion. The Government generally recognizes all religions.

The Government does not require religious institutions to be registered. Religious organizations that operate schools or medical facilities are required to register those specific institutions with the appropriate ministry regulating those areas. Similarly, religious institutions may apply for tax-exempt status and duty-free privileges with the Customs Department, which generally grants such requests.

The Government permits religious education in private schools. There are Islamic and Hebrew primary and secondary schools in the major urban areas, primarily Harare and Bulawayo. In addition there are several institutions of higher education that include religious studies as a core component of the curriculum. There are two such institutions in Harare—the Catholic University and Arrupe College. There is a Methodist institution in Mutare—the Africa University, and a Seventh-Day Adventist college in Matebeleland. The state-supported University of Zimbabwe also has a Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, which has a multid denominational curriculum and faculty. All these institutions have a religiously mixed student body. In addition there are some non-degree awarding institutions, such as teacher training colleges, that also focus on religious studies.

Christian missions provided the first hospitals to care for black citizens. There are 123 hospitals and clinics in the country that fall under the Zimbabwe Association of Christian Hospitals, an association that consists of largely mainstream Christian churches. The individual churches are the predominant source of funding for maintaining these hospitals because of the Government's increasing inability to provide essential services. The Government does provide small subsidies to facilitate the hospitals' functions, but these make up only a small percentage of the hospitals' operating budgets.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Witchcraft—widely understood to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons—traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown. Although traditional indigenous religions generally include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it. In recent years, interest in healing through traditional religion and through prayer reportedly has increased as HIV/AIDS has infected an estimated one-fourth of the adult population, and affordable science-based medicines effective in treating HIV/AIDS have remained unavailable.

The 1890 Witchcraft Suppression Act (WSA), as amended in 1989, criminalizes purporting to practice witchcraft, accusing persons of practicing witchcraft, hunting witches, and soliciting persons to name witches; penalties include imprisonment for up to 7 years. The law defines witchcraft as “the use of charms and any other means or devices adopted in the practice of sorcery,” and provides punishments for intending to cause disease or injury to any person or animal through the use of witchcraft. Since 1997 ZINATHA has proposed amendments to the 1989 law that would redefine witchcraft only as the practice of sorcery with the intent to cause harm, including illness, injury, or death; however, mainstream Christian churches reportedly have opposed such legislation. Human rights groups also generally supported the existing WSA; the Act has been used since independence primarily to protect persons, primarily women, who have been accused falsely of causing harm to persons or crops in rural areas where traditional religious practices are strong.

There is some tension between the Government and some indigenous African churches because of the latter's preference for prayer over science-based medical practices that result in the reduction of avoidable childhood diseases and deaths in those communities. Some members of the indigenous churches and groups believe in healing through prayer only and refuse to have their children vaccinated. The Ministry of Health has had limited success in vaccinating children against communicable childhood diseases in these religious communities. Human rights activists

also have criticized these indigenous churches for their sanctioning of marriages of underage girls.

President Mugabe has expressed skepticism about the increasing membership in evangelical and indigenous churches and has indicated that he believes that they could be subversive. According to press reporting, he has refused to meet with bishops from indigenous churches since 1997.

The Government maintains a monopoly on television broadcasting through the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), despite a broadcasting law passed in 2001 that permits one independent television broadcaster but imposes stringent licensing requirements. The Government permits limited religious broadcasting on ZBC and advertising in the government-controlled press by the older, established Christian churches, as well as new evangelical churches and institutions, such as The 700 Club and World Vision. Programming produced by the U.S.-based Christian Broadcasting Network is shown on ZBC. The Government generally follows the recommendations of the Religious Advisory Board, an umbrella grouping of Christian denominations, on appropriate religious material to broadcast. Muslims, who are not represented on the board, approached the advisory board about obtaining access to airtime. The Roman Catholic chairman of the board is not opposed to recommending that Muslims be given airtime commensurate with their numbers in the country, so long as other religions are not denigrated in the material presented. However, the chairman acknowledged that other evangelical church groups are more hostile to Islam and are unlikely to support the inclusion of Islamic programming in the already limited religious broadcasting block. While ZBC officials with whom the chairman raised this issue in the past had indicated informally that Islamic religious material would be included on ZBC, none had been broadcast by the end of the period covered by this report. The chairman of the Religious Advisory Board believes that this is because Muslims represent too small of a percentage of society to take up minimal religious airtime or to merit membership on the advisory board.

In the last few years, due to inadequate resources, the Government has returned several former church schools that it had taken over at independence to their respective churches. The Government has returned nearly all of the secondary schools and a few of the primary schools that it seized from the churches after independence. Most former church schools that the Government still controls are used as primary schools in the rural areas. The country has had a long history of Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist primary and secondary schools. Since independence there also has been a proliferation of evangelical basic education schools. The Christian schools constitute one-third of the schools in the country, with the Catholic Church having the majority.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government and government supporters targeted some clergymen because they strongly criticized the state-sanctioned, politically motivated crimes and violence during the period prior to the June 2000 parliamentary elections and urged the Government to restore peace in the country (see Section III). In March 2001, authorities ordered Paul Andrianatos, an Anglican priest with South African citizenship, to leave the country days after he had made anti-government remarks at the funeral of slain white farmer Gloria Olds. Andrianatos had presided over the funeral of Olds' son Martin, who also was killed by alleged ruling party supporters in April 2000 (see Section III).

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities. The Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Baha'i, and Buddhist religious communities are relatively small and generally are not in competition with Christian denominations for converts. Catholic Church officials say they welcome interfaith dialog with Muslims. Some of the evangelical churches have fought attempts by some Muslims to require the selling of "halaal," or kosher, meat at non-Muslim shops.

There are at least four umbrella religious organizations primarily focused on interdenominational dialog among Christians and other interreligious activities. However, Muslims are not represented in any of these organizations, and there is no vehicle for formal Christian-Muslim dialog. Muslims have complained of discrimi-

nation by private employers who refuse to allow them sufficient time to worship at their mosques on Fridays.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) is an umbrella organization of all non-Catholic ecumenical Christian missionary churches except for evangelical organizations. It maintains a secretariat in Harare, conducts development programs, has a Justice and Peace desk, and collaborates with the much older Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). The Catholic Church and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference have observer status within the ZCC, and relations generally are cooperative. Some members of the Christian community are hesitant to support Catholics joining the ZCC because of memories of the inability of religious leaders to work together during the liberation war era, and they fear a repeat of that experience. The ZCC also has worked with other church groups and civil society organizations on social issues. The ZCC initially provided a secretariat for the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a respected nongovernmental organization formed to create a new constitution. After a 2-year collaboration, the ZCC withdrew from the NCA over political direction and leadership style differences, although individual churches subsequently rejoined. The ZCC generally is seen as supportive of President Mugabe and does not criticize the President or his Government frequently. However, a rift between the ZCC and the Government emerged when the ZCC and NCA tried to bring together the different parties working on election issues and the Government refused to participate, branding the ZCC as the enemy. Members of the Government resent the ZCC for its role in helping establish the NCA.

The Heads of Denominations (HOD) is a pragmatic association of Catholic and other Christian denominations that has no spiritual or theological emphasis. It was created to enable collaboration among Christian groups and the Government in the operation of religious schools and hospitals. The HOD provides a vehicle for Christian churches to speak to the Government with a common voice on policy issues and includes the Catholic Church, which operates a significant number of the rural hospitals and schools in the country. The HOD has a loose structure and no office. The HOD's secretarial support is provided by the general secretariat of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), and its secretary general holds the same position in the ZCBC. The education secretaries of the various churches work together under the HOD, as does the religious advisory board to the ZBC. This broad grouping of churches under the HOD also collaborate on a wide range of social issues including HIV/AIDS education and, in conjunction with the ZCC, the Christian churches have addressed the declining economic conditions affecting their members across the country. The HOD continues to deliberate over the role religious institutions should play in combating the HIV/AIDS crisis. Many churches already operate programs designed to help the victims of HIV/AIDS; for example, the Catholic Church and other religious and lay persons operate a center for persons infected with HIV/AIDS called "Mashambanzou" in Harare.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) is an umbrella organization of loosely affiliated evangelical churches that was established in the early 1980's. The fellowship has observer status with the HOD but does not work closely with either the ZCC or Catholic Church. However, the evangelical and Catholic churches do collaborate in the broadcasting of religious programs.

Fambidzano, which means "walking together," is a relatively new grouping of indigenous churches. A South African Dutch Reformed Church theologian and social anthropologist, Inus Daneel, who has researched these churches in South Africa and Zimbabwe, founded the organization in the mid-1970's. Fambidzano was created to give the leaders of these churches more theological and biblical education, according to Daneel. There is little dialog between Fambidzano and the Catholic Church; however, the two organizations are discussing the need to work with the indigenous churches to which many persons are turning because of their emphasis on physical healing and spiritual salvation.

ZINATHA is an organization that represents traditional indigenous religions. The head of that organization is a university professor and vocal Anglican who is working to increase interreligious dialog between ZINATHA and mainstream Christian churches.

One area of ecumenical collaboration has been translation of the Bible into the majority language, Shona. Several priests and ministers have worked on this project since 1987.

There were reports of growing tensions between mainstream Christian churches and practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. A notable feature of some of the indigenous churches is the acceptance of polygamy among some of its members. Sexual abuse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the avoidance of modern medicines also are growing problems within these churches. In addition leaders of the Christian

churches reportedly opposed the repeal or modification of the Witchcraft Suppression Act sought by practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. In previous years, several leaders of Christian churches reportedly criticized a perceived increase in "Satanism" in the country. Acts of Satanism allegedly included drinking human blood and eating human flesh; however, there were no reports of such activity during the period covered by this report.

Unlike in the previous reporting period, there were no reports of ritual murders associated with traditional religious practices, and the Government generally enforces the law against murder in the case of ritual murders. Gordon Chavanduka, chairman of ZINATHA reportedly has stated that the black-market demand for human body parts used in making potions has increased greatly in recent years. Some observers suggested that this development might be associated with the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country, and the lack of affordable science-based medicines for treating infected persons. In previous reporting periods, there were reports that persons killed children for body parts for use in practicing healing rituals associated with traditional religions. In July 1999, Faber Chidarikire, a Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front official and mayor of the northern town of Chinhoyi, was charged with murdering a 13-year-old girl in 1987, but he was released on bail shortly thereafter following intervention by the Attorney General; there were reports that Chidarikire cut off the girl's ear and excised her genitals. Chidarikire was tried for the murder of the 13-year-old girl in June 2001; however, after the trial, a judgment in the case was deferred. In a separate case in 1995, an examination of a severed head found in Chidarikire's car in 1994 indicated that it had been severed with a blade, not in a car accident as Chidarikire had maintained.

Several key church leaders and organizations strongly criticized the state-sanctioned, politically motivated crimes and violence during the period prior to the June 2000 parliamentary elections and urged the Government to restore peace in the country. Since the elections, church groups throughout the country gradually have become more vocal in their criticism of the Government for the continuation of politically motivated violence. In an unusual public statement on May 3, 2001, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference criticized the Government for allowing war veterans to conduct a campaign of urban intimidation and called on the Government to restore the rule of law. The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association responded by warning the bishops to "mind their own business" or face unspecified consequences. In 2000 a Catholic clergyman, Father Fidelis Mukonori, publicly engaged in an effort to find a negotiated solution to the occupation of commercial farms by war veterans, and he helped facilitate meetings between both sides and with President Mugabe. In late 2000, Pius Ncube, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, fled to Germany after receiving numerous death threats for writing public letters accusing the Government of fueling political violence and urging citizens to exercise their right to vote. In April 2000, Anglican priest Tim Neil of Harare publicly chastised President Mugabe for condoning commercial farm invasions. Father Neil distributed pamphlets at his Harare parish that questioned the President's legitimacy to remain in office in light of the chaos he said that Mugabe had caused in the country. Father Neil subsequently received a death threat letter signed by Ngonidzashe Mutasa, the secretary general of the Revival of African Conscience, a previously unknown organization with no established following or platform. The police later apprehended Mutasa, and his case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that government supporters attacked church workers whom they suspected of opposition support; however, in early 2001, government supporters threatened clinic workers at the St. Alberts Mission in Mashonaland Central province with violence if they continued to treat opposition supporters. Also in early 2001, a nun in Manicaland province was forced into hiding after receiving threats for failing to treat ruling party supporters fairly.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government supports religious and other constitutionally protected freedoms through demarches to the Government, nondenominational financial support for community development projects, which often are associated with religious institutions, and regular dialog with and support for civil society organizations that advocate and monitor respect for human rights, including freedom of religion.

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

AUSTRALIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 282,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 19.3 million. According to the 1996 census, 71 percent of citizens consider themselves to be Christian, including 27 percent Roman Catholic, 22 percent who are Anglican, and 22 percent who are of other Christian denominations. During the first census in 1911, 96 percent of citizens identified themselves as Christian. Traditional Christian denominations have seen their total number and proportion of affiliates stagnate or decrease significantly since the 1950's. Of the Christian denominations, Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses showed the largest increase in members from 1991 to 1996, 16 percent and 12 percent respectively. In 1996 approximately 17 percent of citizens considered themselves to have no religion, a 35 percent increase from 1991.

At the time of the European settlement of the country, aboriginal inhabitants followed religions that were animistic in nature, involving belief in spirits behind the forces of nature and the influence of ancestral spirit beings. Aboriginal beliefs and spirituality, even among those aborigines who identify themselves as members of a traditional organized religion, are intrinsically linked to the land generally and to certain sites of significance in particular. According to the 1996 census, 2 percent of Aborigines and 0.04 percent of all citizens practice traditional indigenous religions. Almost 72 percent of Aborigines practice some form of Christianity, while 16 percent list no religion. The percentage of Aborigines who practice Christianity and who list no religion mirrors almost exactly the percentages in the wider community.

Recent increased immigration from Southeast Asia and the Middle East has expanded considerably the numbers of citizens who identify themselves as Buddhists and Muslims, about 200,000 and 68,000 respectively. Affiliates of non-Christian religions, while only 3.5 percent of the population, have shown the largest increases in members since the 1991 census. Stated affiliation with Hinduism increased by 55 percent, with Buddhism by 43 percent, with Islam by 36 percent, and with Judaism by 8 percent. These changes have resulted partly from trends in immigration. In 1996 approximately 48 percent of those who had arrived in the country since 1991 were Christians, 23 percent had no religion, 8 percent were affiliated with Buddhism, 8 percent with Islam, and 1 percent with Judaism.

Missionaries work in the country; however, there are no current statistics available on their number.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. A provision of the Constitution precludes the adoption of a state religion. Minority religions are given equal rights to land, status, and building of places of worship.

Religious groups are not required to register.

The Government has put in place extensive programs to promote public acceptance of diversity and multicultural pluralism, although none are focused specifically on religion.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

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

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In a 1998 report on freedom of religion and belief in the country by the federally funded but independent Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the Commission stated that "despite the legal protections that apply in different jurisdictions, many Australians suffer discrimination on the basis of religious belief or non-belief, including members of both mainstream and non-mainstream religions and those of no religious persuasion." Many non-Christian adherents have complained to the HREOC that the overwhelming dominance of traditional Christianity in civic life has the potential to marginalize large numbers of citizens. However, they have not presented any concrete evidence of such marginalization. Persons who suffer discrimination on the basis of religion may resort to the court system, which is an effective method of obtaining redress.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promoting of human rights.

BRUNEI

The Constitution states that, "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafeite sect of that religion: Provided that all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the person professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam;" however, the Government imposes some restrictions on non-Islamic religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The official religion is Islam, as practiced by the Shafeite School. Other religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, also are practiced; however, non-Muslims are not allowed to proselytize, nor are parochial schools allowed to teach the religions of their respective faiths. The Government detained several Christians in late 2000 and early 2001 for alleged subversive activities.

The country's various religious groups coexist peacefully, although they do not interact regularly.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 2,100 square miles, and its resident population is approximately 340,000. The Government does not publish detailed data on religious affiliation; however, the majority of citizens are Muslim. About 20 percent of the population are ethnic Chinese, of which approximately half are Christians (Anglicans, Catholics, and Methodists) and half are Buddhists. There also is a large foreign-born workforce composed of Australian, British, Filipino, Indian, Indonesian, and Malaysian expatriates that include Muslims, Christians, and Hindus.

The Brunei-Muara district, including the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, has over 50 mosques and suraus (Islamic prayer rooms), but there are only 2 churches and 1 Buddhist temple. There is no Hindu temple.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution states that, "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafeite sect of that religion: Provided that all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the person professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam;" however, the Government imposes some restrictions on non-Islamic religions. The official religion is Islam as practiced by the Shafeite School.

The Government describes the country as a Malay Islamic monarchy. The Government actively promotes adherence to Islamic values and traditions by its Muslim residents. The Ministry of Religious Affairs deals solely with Islam and Islamic laws, which exist alongside secular laws and apply only to Muslims.

Religious organizations are required to register with the Government, as are commercial and nonreligious associations.

In February 1998, the Government allowed the Roman Catholic Church to establish and install the first apostolic prefect in the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In 1991 the Government began to reinforce the legitimacy of the hereditary monarchy and the observance of traditional and Muslim values by reasserting a national ideology known as the Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) or "Malay Islamic Monarchy," the genesis of which reportedly dates from the 15th century. In 1993 the Government participated in issuing the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which affirms the right of all persons to a wide range of human rights, including freedom of religion. Despite this and the constitutional provisions providing for the full and unconstrained exercise of religious freedom, the Government restricts the practice of non-Muslim religions by: Prohibiting proselytizing of Muslims; occasionally denying entry to foreign clergy or particular priests, bishops, or ministers; banning the importation of religious teaching materials or scriptures such as the Bible; and refusing permission to expand, repair, or build new churches, temples, or shrines.

The Government sporadically expressed concern about "outsiders" preaching radical Islamic fundamentalist or unorthodox beliefs. In 1995 the Government banned the Al-Arqam movement, a radical Islamic group; it remains banned. Citizens deemed to have been influenced by such preaching (usually students returning from overseas study) have been "shown the error of their ways" in study seminars organized by mainstream Islamic religious leaders. Moreover, the Government does not hesitate to investigate and to use its internal security apparatus against purveyors of radical Islam or "deviationist" Islamic groups.

The proselytizing by faiths other than the official Islam is not permitted. There are no missionaries working in the country.

The Government routinely censors magazine articles on other faiths, blacking out or removing photographs of crucifixes and other Christian religious symbols. Government officials also guard against the distribution and sale of items that feature undesirable photographs or religious symbols.

The Government requires residents to carry an identity card that states the bearer's religion; however, the Government no longer requires visitors to identify their religion on their landing cards.

Religious affairs authorities sometimes raid nightspots to confiscate alcoholic beverages and to monitor restaurants and supermarkets to ensure conformity with "halal" practices such as Islamic requirements covering the slaughter of animals and the ban on pork products. The majority of citizens generally regard the actions as a means of upholding Islam.

The Ministry of Education requires courses on Islam or the MIB in all schools. It prohibits the teaching of other religions.

The Ministry requires that all students, including non-Muslims, follow a course of study on the Islamic faith and learn the jawi (Arabic script). The International School of Brunei and the Jeurdong International School are exempt from these restrictions. Private mission schools are not allowed to give Christian instruction and are required to give instruction about Islam; however, the Government does not prohibit or restrict parents from giving religious instruction to children in their own homes. In January 2000, the Government responded to objections from parents and religious leaders and set aside tentative plans to require that more Islamic courses be taught in private, non-Islamic parochial schools. There were no indications that the Government would again propose these plans for non-Islamic schools.

Religious authorities encourage Muslim women to wear the tudong, a traditional head covering, and many women do so. However, some Muslim women do not, and there is no official pressure on non-Muslim women to do so. In government schools,

Muslim and non-Muslim female students must wear Muslim attire, including a head covering as a part of their "uniform." Muslim male students are expected to wear the songhok (hat).

In accordance with Koranic precepts, women are denied equal status with men in a number of important areas such as divorce, inheritance, and custody of children. Under the Brunei Nationality Act, citizenship is transmitted through the father. Female citizens who are married to foreigners or bear children by foreign fathers cannot transmit citizenship to their children, even when such children are born in the country.

In July 1999, a new Married Women's Law came into effect, improving significantly the rights of non-Muslim married women with respect to maintenance, property, and domestic violence. In November 1999, changes to the Islamic Family Law (in the section on Women's Position in Marriage and Divorce) came into effect and are expected to improve the marital rights of Muslim women.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In general those adhering to faiths other than Islam are allowed to practice their beliefs, provided that they exercise restraint and do not proselytize. Those non-Muslims who do proselytize may expect to be arrested or detained, and possibly held without charges for extended periods of time.

In late 2000 and early 2001, the Government used the Internal Security Act to detain at least seven Christians for allegedly subversive activities; they were not charged with a crime. Government Brunei officials maintain that the detentions are a security, not a religious, matter.

In July 2000, the Government briefly detained for questioning local members of a small "deviationist" Islamic sect after the same sect in Malaysia reportedly was involved in military arms theft.

There were no reports, other than of the three Christians in detention for alleged subversive activities, of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country's various religious groups peacefully coexist, although they do not interact regularly.

The country's national philosophy, the Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) concept, discourages open-mindedness to religions other than Islam, and there are no programs to promote understanding of other religions. The country's indigenous people generally convert either to Islam or Christianity but rarely to Buddhism. Consequently, Muslim officials view Christianity as the main rival to official Islam and there is little reported dialog among the country's religious leaders and their counterparts in the Christian and Buddhist religions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of encouraging the growth of rudimentary democratic institutions. The Embassy has good relations with officials and members from the Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist faiths.

BURMA

Burma has been ruled since 1962 by highly repressive, authoritarian military regimes. Since 1998 when the armed forces brutally suppressed massive prodemocracy demonstrations, a junta composed of senior military officers has ruled by decree, without a constitution or legislature. The most recent Constitution, promulgated in 1974, permitted both legislative and administrative restrictions on religious freedom, stating that "the national races shall enjoy the freedom to profess their religion, provided that the enjoyment of any such freedom does not offend the laws or the public interest." Most adherents of all religions that are registered with the authorities generally are allowed to worship as they choose; however, the Government has imposed restrictions on certain religious activities and frequently abused the right to freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of the limited respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Through its pervasive internal security apparatus, the Government generally infiltrated or monitored the meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious organizations. It systematically has restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom, has discouraged or prohibited minority religions from constructing new places of worship, and, in some ethnic minority areas, has coercively promoted Buddhism over other religions, particularly among members of the minority ethnic groups. Christian groups have experienced increasing difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches, while Muslims report that they essentially are banned from constructing any new mosques anywhere in the country. There also was a sharp increase in the level of anti-Muslim violence during the period covered by this report, some of which the Government may have tacitly supported, contributed to, or even instigated.

There are social tensions between the Buddhist majority and the Christian and Muslim minorities, largely due to colonial and contemporary government preferences. There is widespread prejudice against Muslims. A sharp increase in anti-Muslim violence significantly heightened tensions between the Buddhist and Muslim communities during the first 6 months of 2001, as it has done in the past when such violence occurred.

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy towards Burma has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Burma a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Secretary of State redesignated Burma in October 2000.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 251,000 square miles and a population of approximately 50 million persons. The great majority of the country's population at least nominally follows Theravada Buddhism, although in practice popular Burmese Buddhism includes veneration of many indigenous pre-Buddhist deities called "nats," and coexists with astrology, numerology, and fortune-telling. Buddhist monks, including novices, number more than 300,000 persons, roughly 2 percent of the male Buddhist population, and depend for their material needs entirely on alms donated by the laity, including daily donations of food. The clergy also includes a much smaller number of nuns. There are minorities of Christians (mostly Baptists as well as some Catholics and Anglicans), Muslims (mostly Sunni), Hindus, and practitioners of traditional Chinese and indigenous religions. According to government statistics, almost 90 percent of the population practice Buddhism, 4 percent practice Christianity, and 4 percent practice Islam; however, these statistics may understate the non-Buddhist proportion of the population. A very small Jewish community, estimated to be less than 50 persons, exists in Rangoon.

The country is ethnically diverse, and there is some correlation between ethnicity and religion. Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion among the majority Burman ethnic group, and among the Shan and Mon ethnic minorities of the eastern and southern regions. In much of the country there also is some correlation between religion and social class, in that non-Buddhists tend to be better educated in secular matters, more urbanized, and more business oriented than the Buddhist majority.

Christianity is the dominant religion among the Kachin ethnic group of the northern region and the Chin and Naga ethnic groups of the western region (some of which practice traditional indigenous religions); it also is practiced widely among the Karen and Karenni ethnic groups of the southern and eastern regions. Many other Karen and Karenni are Theravada Buddhists. Hinduism is practiced chiefly by Indians, mostly Tamils and Bengalis, who are concentrated in major cities and in the south-central region (although many Tamils are Catholic). Islam is practiced widely in Arakan State, where it is the dominant religion of the Rohingya minority, and among Indians and Bengalis and their descendants. The Chinese ethnic minorities practice traditional Chinese religions. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced widely among smaller ethnic groups in the northern regions and practices drawn from those indigenous religions persist widely in popular Buddhist rituals, especially in rural areas.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The country has been ruled since 1962 by highly authoritarian military regimes. The latest military regime, now called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), has governed without a constitution or legislature since 1988. The most recent Constitution, promulgated in 1974, permitted both legislative and administrative restrictions on religious freedom, stating that “the national races shall enjoy the freedom to profess their religion provided that the enjoyment of any such freedom does not offend the laws or the public interest.” Most adherents of all religions that were registered with the authorities generally have enjoyed the right to worship as they choose; however, the Government has imposed restrictions on certain religious activities and frequently abused the right to religious freedom.

There is no official state religion; however, in practice the Government continued to show a preference for Theravada Buddhism. Successive governments, civilian and military, have supported and associated themselves conspicuously with Buddhism.

Virtually all organizations must be registered with the Government. Although there is a government directive exempting “genuine” religious organizations from registration, in practice only registered organizations can buy or sell property or open bank accounts, which induces most religious organizations to register. Religious organizations register with the Ministry of Home Affairs with the endorsement of the Ministry for Religious Affairs. The State also provides some utility services, such as electricity, at preferential rates to recognized religious organizations.

Official public holidays include some Christian and Islamic holy days, as well as several Theravada Buddhist holy days.

The Government ostensibly promotes mutual understanding among practitioners of different religions. The Government maintains a multi-religion monument in downtown Rangoon. In 1998 the Government announced plans to build a new multi-religion Square on some of the land that it recovered in 1997 by relocating Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim cemeteries in Rangoon’s Kyandaw neighborhood. At the end of the period covered by this report, the project still was under development; however, a dispute between the Government and Christian groups over whether a cross would be included in the project design remained one of several unresolved obstacles.

Since independence in 1948, many of the ethnic minority areas have been bases for armed resistance to the Government. Although the Government has negotiated cease-fire agreements with most armed ethnic groups since 1989, active Shan, Karen and Karenni insurgencies continue, and a Chin insurgency has developed since the late 1980’s. Successive civilian and military governments have tended to view religious freedom in the context of threats to national unity.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government, which operates a pervasive internal security apparatus, generally infiltrates or monitors the meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious organizations. Religious activities and organizations of all faiths also are subject to broad government restrictions on freedom of expression and association. The Government also subjects all publications, including religious publications, to control and censorship. The Government generally prohibits outdoor meetings, including religious meetings, of more than five persons. This monitoring and control undermines the free exchange of thoughts and ideas associated with religious activities.

The Government continued both to show preference for Theravada Buddhism, the majority religion, and to control the organization and restrict the activities and expression of its clergy (“sangha”). Beginning in late 1990, the Government banned any organization of Buddhist clergy other than the nine state-recognized monastic orders. These nine orders submit to the authority of a state-sponsored State Clergy Coordination Committee (“Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee”—SMNC), which is elected indirectly by monks. The Government also authorized military commanders to try Buddhist clergy before military tribunals for “activities inconsistent with and detrimental to Buddhism,” and imposed on Buddhist clergy a code of conduct. Infractions of the code are punished by criminal penalties. In 1999 the regional military commander in Mandalay reportedly issued an order that forbade Buddhist clergy to leave their township of residence without first surrendering their identity cards and obtaining written permission from local authorities. Persons other than Buddhist clergy generally were not subject to such severe restrictions on movement.

Through the 1990’s, the Government increasingly made special efforts to link itself with Buddhism as a means of boosting its own legitimacy. State-controlled news media continued frequently to depict or describe government members paying

homage to Buddhist monks; making donations at pagodas throughout the country; officiating at ceremonies to open, improve, restore or maintain pagodas; and organizing ostensibly voluntary “people’s donations” of money, food, and uncompensated labor to build or refurbish Buddhist religious shrines throughout the country. State-owned newspapers routinely featured, as front-page banner slogans, quotations from the Buddhist scriptures. The Government has published books of Buddhist religious instruction. The Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a government-sponsored mass organization in which participation often is not entirely voluntary, has organized courses in Buddhist culture attended by millions of persons, according to state-owned media reports.

The Government continued to fund two State Sangha Universities in Rangoon and Mandalay to train Buddhist clergy under the control of the SMNC. The State’s relations with the Buddhist clergy and Buddhist schools are handled chiefly by the Department for the Perpetuation and Propagation of the Sasana (DPPS—“Sasana” means Buddhist doctrine) in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. During the mid-1990’s, the Government funded the construction of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in Rangoon, which opened in December 1998. The ITBMU’s stated purpose is “to share Myanmar’s knowledge of Buddhism with the people of the world,” and the main language of instruction is English.

The Government continued to monitor closely the activities of members of all religions, including Buddhism, in part because clergy and congregation members in the past have become active politically. In 1995 the military Government prohibited the ordination as clergy of any member of a political party, and this measure remains in effect.

The Government continued to discriminate against members of minority religions, restricting the educational, proselytizing, and building activities of minority religious groups. There is a concentration of Christians among some of the ethnic minorities (e.g., the Karen and Kachin) against which the army has fought for decades, although groups that practice Buddhism (e.g., the Shan) also have waged many of the ethnic insurgencies.

Government authorities continued to prohibit Christian clergy from proselytizing in some areas, often in support of local Buddhist populations opposed to the spread of Christianity. In at least one instance, clergy were beaten to discourage proselytizing. Local military commanders, who often issue such orders, rarely cite any legal justification for their actions. In general the Government has not allowed permanent foreign religious missions to operate in the country since the mid-1960’s, when it expelled nearly all foreign missionaries and nationalized all private schools and hospitals, which were extensive and were affiliated mostly with Christian religious organizations. The Government is not known to have paid any compensation in connection with these extensive confiscations. However, the Government has allowed a few elderly Catholic priests and nuns who have worked in the country since before independence to continue their work. At times, religious groups, including Catholics and Protestants, bring in foreign clergy and religious workers as tourists but are careful to ensure that their activities are not perceived as proselytizing by the government. Some Christian theological seminaries established before 1962 also have continued to operate; however, during the period covered by this report, military authorities forced a Bible school, which had been operating in Tamu Township in Sagaing Division since 1976, to close.

Christian groups have experienced increasing difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches, while Muslims report that they essentially are banned from constructing any new mosques anywhere in the country. Buddhist groups are not known to have experienced similar difficulties in obtaining permission to build pagodas or monasteries. In parts of Chin State, authorities reportedly have not authorized the construction of any new churches since 1997. The Government reportedly also has denied permission for churches to be built on main roads in cities such as Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. In Rangoon authorities have instructed various Christian groups to call their worship facilities “social centers” rather than “churches.” In most regions of the country, Christian and Muslim groups that seek to build small churches or mosques on side streets or other inconspicuous locations sometimes have been able to proceed, but increasingly only based on informal, rather than formal, approval from local authorities. These groups report that formal requests encounter long delays and, especially for Muslims, generally are denied. However, obtaining an informal approval from local authorities creates a tenuous legal situation. For example, there were instances cited during the period covered by this report in which local authorities or conditions changed and the informal approval for construction was rescinded abruptly and construction halted.

Since the 1960’s, Christian and Islamic groups have had difficulties importing religious literature into the country. Religious publications, like secular ones, re-

mained subject to control and censorship. Translations of the Bible into indigenous languages can not be imported legally, although Bibles can be printed locally in indigenous languages with Government permission. In 1999 approximately 20,000 illegally imported Bibles were seized in Tamu Township in Sagaing Division. Countering rumors that the Bibles were destroyed, during the period covered by this report, authorities informed one religious group that the Bibles were in storage in Rangoon. One religious group reports that it received government permission to import 2,000 English-language Bibles, the first such import allowed in 20 years; however, by the end of the period covered by this report, the Bibles still had not been imported.

State censorship authorities continued to enforce restrictions on the local publication of the Bible, and Christian and Muslim publications in general. The most onerous restriction is a list of over 100 prohibited words that the censors would not allow in Christian or Islamic literature because they purportedly are indigenous-language terms long used in Buddhist literature. Many of these words have been used and accepted by some of the country's Christian and Muslim groups since the colonial period. Organizations that translate and publish non-Buddhist religious texts are appealing these restrictions. They reportedly have succeeded in reducing the number of prohibited words to around 12, but the issue still was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. In addition according to other reports, the censors have objected to passages of the Old Testament and the Koran that may appear to approve the use of violence against nonbelievers. Although possession of publications not approved by the censors is an offense for which persons have been arrested and prosecuted in the past, there have been no reports of arrests or prosecutions for possession of any traditional religious literature in recent years.

Non-Buddhists continued to experience employment discrimination at upper levels of the public sector. Only one non-Buddhist served in the Government at a ministerial level, and the same person, a brigadier general, is the only non-Buddhist known to have held flag rank in the armed forces during the 1990's. The Government discourages Muslims from entering military service, and Christian or Muslim military officers who aspire to promotion beyond middle ranks are encouraged by their superiors to convert to Buddhism.

Members of the Muslim Rohingya minority in Arakan State, on the country's western coast, continued to experience severe legal, economic, and social discrimination. The Government denies citizenship status to most Rohingyas on the grounds that their ancestors allegedly did not reside in the country at the start of British colonial rule, as required by the country's highly restrictive citizenship law. Members of the Muslim Rohingya minority returnees complained of severe government restrictions on their ability to travel and their ability to engage in economic activity. Unlike the practice for other foreign persons in the country, these Muslims are not issued a foreign registration card (FRC). They are required to obtain permission from the township authorities whenever they wish to leave their village area. Authorities generally do not grant permission to travel to Rangoon to Rohingya Muslims, but permission sometimes can be obtained through bribery. In addition because the Government reserves secondary education for citizens only, Rohingya do not have access to state run schools beyond primary education, and are unable to obtain most civil service positions.

The Government allowed members of all religious groups to establish and maintain links with coreligionists in other countries and to travel abroad for religious purposes, subject to restrictive passport and visa issuance practices, foreign exchange controls, and government monitoring that extends to all international activities for any purpose. The Government sometimes expedited its burdensome passport issuance procedures for Muslims making the Hajj.

Religious affiliation sometimes is indicated on government-issued identification cards that citizens and permanent residents of the country are required to carry at all times. There appear to be no consistent criteria governing whether a person's religion is indicated on his or her identification card. Citizens also are required to indicate their religions on some official application forms, e.g., on passports (which have a separate "field" for religion, as well as ethnicity).

Buddhist doctrine remained part of the state-mandated curriculum in all elementary schools. Individual children may opt out of instruction in Buddhism, and sometimes do so in practice; however, at times the Government also deals harshly with efforts to opt out.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There continued to be reports that military officers killed villagers who refused to provide portering services to the Army. For example, on December 15, 2000, junta military officers allegedly shot and killed the local imam of a mosque in Karen State

for asking the authorities to spare him from portering, as it was the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.

Government security forces continued to take actions against minority Christian groups, arresting clergy, destroying churches, and prohibiting religious services. In Chin State in the western part of the country in particular, the Government attempted to coerce members of the Chin ethnic minority to convert to Buddhism and prevented Christian Chin from proselytizing by, among other things, arresting and physically abusing Christian clergy and destroying churches. Until 1990 the Chin generally practiced either Christianity or traditional indigenous religions. (The Chin were the only major ethnic minority in the country that did not support any significant armed organization in active rebellion against the Government or in an armed cease-fire with the Government. However, Chin opposition groups emerged in 1988 and subsequently developed into active insurgencies against the Government.)

Authorities have attempted to prevent the Chin Christians from practicing their religion. Military units repeatedly located their camps on the sites of Christian churches and graveyards, which were destroyed to build these camps; local Chin Christians were forced to assist in these acts of desecration. In addition the Army reportedly also tends to take over churches to use for bases when in remote areas, thus desecrating the church. Since the early 1990's, security forces have torn down or forced villagers to tear down crosses that had been erected outside Chin Christian villages. These crosses often have been replaced with pagodas, sometimes built with forced labor. Some of these crosses had been erected in remembrance of former missionaries from the United States, while others merely are symbols of faith. During the period covered by this report, there are reports that, while the Government still bans most of these crosses, permission has been granted to erect at least one cross in Southern Chin State. It also was reported that in July 2000, Captain Khin Maung Myint forcibly ordered the closure of all Christian schools in Tamu Township. The authorities reportedly subjected Christian sermons to censorship. Government authorities repeatedly prohibited Christian clergy from proselytizing. In the past, soldiers beat Christian clergy who refused to sign statements promising to stop preaching to non-Christians. Since 1990 government authorities and security forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, coercively have sought to prevent Christian Chins from proselytizing to Chins who practice indigenous religions.

Since 1990 government authorities and security forces have promoted Buddhism over Christianity among the Chin ethnic minority in diverse and often coercive ways. This campaign, reportedly accompanied by other efforts to "Burmanize" the Chin, has involved a large increase in military units stationed in Chin State and other predominately Chin areas, state-sponsored immigration of Buddhist Burman monks from other regions, and construction of Buddhist monasteries and shrines in Chin communities with few or no Buddhists, often by means of forced "donations" of money or labor. Local government officials promised monthly support payments to individuals and households that converted to Buddhism. Government soldiers stationed in Chin State reportedly were given higher rank and pay if they induced Chin women to marry them and convert to Buddhism. The authorities reportedly supplied rice to Buddhists at lower prices than to Christians, distributed extra supplies of foodstuffs to Buddhists on Sunday mornings while Christians attended church, and exempted converts to Buddhism from forced labor. In the past, it credibly was reported that in Karen State's Pa'an Township army units repeatedly conscripted as porters young men leaving Sunday worship services at some Christian churches, causing young men to avoid church attendance. Soldiers led by officers repeatedly disrupted Christian worship services and celebrations. Chin Christians were forced to "donate" labor to clean and maintain Buddhist shrines. There also were a number of credible reports that the Army continued to force Chin to porter for it, both in Chin State and Sagaing Division. More specifically it was reported that the Army no longer takes rations with it, and rather lives off of local villagers, by force if someone refuses to help, although villagers reportedly were allowed to buy their way out of such work. Local government officials ordered Christian Chins to attend sermons by newly arrived Buddhist monks who disparaged Christianity. In addition during the period covered by this report, it was reported that many Christian Chin are pressured and some are forced to attend monk school and Buddhist monasteries and then encouraged to convert to Buddhism. Local government officials separated the children of Chin Christians from their parents under false pretenses of giving them free secular education and allowing them to practice their own religion, while in fact the children were lodged in Buddhist monasteries where they were instructed in and converted to Buddhism without their parents' knowledge or consent. Finally since 1990, government authorities and security

forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, coercively have sought to induce Chins, including children, to convert to Theravada Buddhism.

According to the Chin Human Rights Organization, during the period covered by this report, Lt. Colonel Biak To was fired from his military position and fined; allegedly his army and police superiors discriminated against him because of his religious (Christian) and ethnic (Chin) identity.

There were unconfirmed reports of governmental restrictions on the religious freedom of Christians among the Naga ethnic minority in the far northwest of the country. These reports suggested that the Government sought to induce members of the Naga to convert to Buddhism by means similar to those it used to convert members of the Chin to Buddhism. However, reports concerning the Naga, although credible, are less numerous than reports concerning the Chin. Consequently knowledge of the status of religious freedom among the Naga is less certain. During 1999 the first mass exodus of Naga religious refugees from the country occurred; more than 1,000 Christians of the Naga ethnic group reportedly fled the country to India. These Naga reportedly claimed that the army and Buddhist monks tried to force them to convert to Buddhism and had forced them to close churches in their villages, then desecrated the churches. A particularly harsh military commander in the Naga area reportedly was removed from command in late 2000 and imprisoned for rape.

There are credible reports that SPDC authorities have systematically repressed and relocated Muslims to isolate them into certain areas. For example, Rakhine Muslims have been forced to donate time, money, and materials toward buildings for the Buddhist community. There now are certain townships in the Rakhine State, Thandwe, Gwa, and Taung-gut, for instance, which are "Muslim-free zones." Muslims no longer are permitted to live in the areas, mosques have been destroyed, and lands confiscated. To ensure that the mosques are not rebuilt, they have been replaced with government owned-buildings, monasteries, and Buddhist temples. Authorities also have issued a court order in Rakhine stating that the killing of a Muslim will be punished with a minimal 3-month sentence while, in contrast, the sentence for a Muslim hitting a Buddhist will be 3 years. In northern Arakan State, there are credible reports that, by the end of the period covered by this report, the Government systematically was destroying mosques in some small villages. In one area, local authorities already had destroyed at least 10 of 40 mosques that had been designated for destruction. The mosques, which typically are little more than thatch huts, reportedly were constructed without proper authority by villagers who had difficulty getting to mosques in neighboring towns due to strict travel restrictions on Muslims.

There was a sharp increase in anti-Muslim violence in the country during the period covered by this report. In February 2001, riots broke out in the town of Sittwe, the capital of Arakan State. There were various, often conflicting, accounts of how the riots began, but reports consistently stated that government security and fire-fighting forces did little to prevent attacks on Muslim mosques, businesses, and residences. There also were credible reports that at least some of the monks that led attacks on Muslims were military or USDA instigators dressed as monks. After 4 days of rioting, security forces moved in and prevented any additional violence. There are estimates that over 50 Muslim homes burned to the ground and both Muslims and Buddhists were killed and injured. Since that time, the Government has tightened already strict travel restrictions for Muslims in the area, essentially preventing any Muslims from travelling between Sittwe and other towns in the region. There is an unconfirmed report that in late March or early April 2001, seven Arakanese politicians were sentenced to 7- to 12-year prison terms for inciting the riots.

On May 15, 2001, anti-Muslim riots broke out in the town of Taungoo in the Bago Division between Rangoon and Mandalay (an estimated 2,000 of 90,000 Taungoo inhabitants are Muslim). The riots followed the same pattern as those in Sittwe: there were varying accounts of what precipitated the fighting, security and firefighting forces did not intervene, and Muslim mosques, businesses, and residences were targeted. Again there were credible reports that the monks that appeared to be inciting at least some of the violence were USDA or military personnel dressed as monks. After 2 days of violence the military stepped in and the violence immediately ended, but not before there was widespread destruction of Muslim homes and businesses and, reportedly, several Mosques. An estimated 10 Muslims and 2 Buddhists were killed in this incident.

While there is no direct evidence linking the Government to these violent acts against Muslims, there are reports that the instigators were military or USDA personnel. There also are reports that local government authorities alerted Muslim elders in advance of the attacks and warned them not to retaliate to avoid escalating the violence. While the specifics of how these attacks began and who carried them

out may never be documented fully, it appears that the Government was, at best, very slow to protect Muslims and their property from destruction. The violence significantly heightened tensions between the Buddhist and Muslim communities during the period covered by this report (see Section III).

In 1991 tens of thousands (according to some reports as many as 300,000 persons) of members of the Muslim Rohingya minority fled from Arakan State into Bangladesh following anti-Muslim violence alleged, although not proven, to have involved government troops. Many of the 21,000 Rohingya Muslims remaining in refugee camps in Bangladesh have refused to return to Burma because they feared human rights abuses, including religious persecution. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that authorities cooperated in investigating isolated incidents of renewed abuse of repatriated citizens.

For example, according to the Muslim Information Center of Burma (MICB), a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), on September 1, 2000, four Muslim elders of Daing Win Gwan Block village, Moulmein Township in Mon State, filed an application with the authorities to allow the Muslim students not to continue learning Buddhism in school; the authorities arrested the four elders for their actions.

The Government continued to prevent Buddhist monks from calling for democracy and political dialog with prodemocracy forces. During the period covered by this report, government efforts to control these monks have included travel restrictions, arrests, pressure on Buddhist leaders to expel "undisciplined monks," and a prohibition on certain monasteries from receiving political party members as overnight guests. More than 100 monks credibly have been identified as having been imprisoned during the 1990's for supporting democracy and human rights; however, about half of these have been released, and there is no reliable estimate of the number of Buddhist clergy in prisons or labor camps by the end of the period covered by this report. Following a February 2000 letter from the Young Buddhist Monk Union advocating political actions, government authorities reportedly arrested approximately 40 monks in May or June 2001. By the end of the period covered by this report, the status of those arrested remained unknown. Monks serving sentences of life in prison reportedly included the venerable U Kalyana of Mandalay, a member of the Aung San Red Star Association, and the venerable U Kawiya of the Phayahyi monastery in Mandalay.

In July 2000, U Tay Zawata, a monk in Shan State, filed a complaint with the SPDC Secretary One Lt. General and the Attorney General stating that on August 23, 1999, government authorities in the town of Tachileik had destroyed 2 monasteries and dispersed over 50 monks without a proper court order and without compensation.

There continued to be credible reports from diverse regions of the country that government officials compelled persons, especially in rural areas, to contribute money, food, or uncompensated labor to state-sponsored projects to build, renovate, or maintain Buddhist religious shrines or monuments. The Government calls these contributions "voluntary donations" and imposes them on both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. In recent years, there had been credible reports that Muslims in Arakan State have been compelled to build Buddhist pagodas as part of the country's forced labor program. These pagodas often have been built on confiscated Muslim land. However, there were no known reports of such activity during the period covered by this report. There also were reports of forced labor being used to dismantle temples and monasteries. For example, on July 27, 2000, army troops from the 246th Infantry Division reportedly forced 54 men to dismantle several temples and monasteries in the forced relocation areas of Kun-Hing township; on August 10, 2000, the same troops again conscripted 87 workers from the same town and forced them to build a shelter for the lumber and tin sheets taken from the dismantled monasteries.

Government restrictions on speech, press, assembly, and movement, including diplomatic travel, make it difficult to obtain timely and accurate information on human rights in Burma, including freedom of religion. Information about abuses often becomes available only months or years after the events, from refugees who have fled to other countries, from released political prisoners, or from occasional travel inside the country by foreign journalists and scholars.

Forced Religious Conversion

Since 1990 government authorities and security forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, coercively have sought to induce Chins, including children, to convert to Theravada Buddhism.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are social tensions between the Buddhist majority and the Christian and Muslim minorities, largely due to preferential treatment by the Government, both in hiring and other areas, in practice (although not in law) both for non-Buddhists during British colonial rule and for Buddhists since independence. There is widespread prejudice against Muslims, many of whom are ethnic Indians or Bengalis. The Government reportedly contributed to or instigated anti-Muslim violence in Arakan State in 1991, in Shan State and Rangoon in 1996, in cities throughout the country in 1997, and again during the period covered by this report (see Section II).

A book entitled "In Fear of Our Race Disappearing," which first appeared in 1997 or 1998 by an unknown author, has contributed to anti-Muslim sentiments among Burmese Buddhists. The book describes how Muslims will displace Buddhists in the country unless actions are taken against them. Distribution of the book appears to have increased during the period covered by this report, although it is not clear who has been publishing it. The book was cited as one factor which contributed to the rioting in early 2001 in Sittwe and Taungoo (see Section II).

Since 1994 when the progovernment Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was organized, there has been armed conflict between the DKBA and the Karen National Union (KNU). Although the DKBA reportedly includes some Christians, and there are many Buddhists in the KNU, the armed conflict between the two Karen groups has had strong religious overtones. During the mid-1990's, it reportedly was common DKBA practice to torture Christian villagers and kill them if they refused to convert to Buddhism; however, DKBA treatment of Christians reportedly improved substantially after the DKBA settled down to administer the regions that it had conquered.

In June 2000, authorities claimed that on June 17, 2000, Karenni National Progressive Party insurgents shot and wounded a Catholic priest, Father Abe Lei, and took four other persons hostage in Kayah State. Other reports indicate that the priest was shot accidentally and the four persons taken hostage were not associated with him. The reports also indicate that the hostages have since been released.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy towards Burma has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. The United States has discontinued bilateral aid to the Government, suspended issuance of licenses to export arms to the country, and suspended the generalized system of preferences and export-import bank financial services in support of U.S. exports to Burma. The U.S. Government also has suspended all Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) financial services in support of U.S. investment in Burma, ended active promotion of trade with Burma, and halted issuance of visas to high government officials and their immediate family members. It also has banned new investment in Burma by U.S. firms, opposed all assistance to the Government by international financial institutions, and urged the governments of other countries to take similar actions.

The U.S. Government actively supported the decision of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in November 2000 to implement sanctions against the Government of Burma, based on the Government's continued systematic use of forced labor for a wide range of civilian and military purposes.

The U.S. Embassy has promoted religious freedom in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. This has involved numerous contacts with government officials, private Burmese citizens, scholars, representatives of other governments, international media representatives, and international business representatives. Embassy staff have met repeatedly with leaders of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic religious groups, members of the faculties of schools of theology, and other religious-affiliated organizations and NGO's as part of their reporting and public diplomacy activities.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Burma as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Secretary of State redesignated Burma in October 2000.

CAMBODIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 67,000 square miles and a population of approximately 12 million. Approximately 93 percent of the population is Hinayana and Theravada Buddhist. The Buddhist tradition is widespread and active in all provinces, with an estimated 4,100 pagodas throughout the country. The vast majority of ethnic Cambodians are Buddhist, and there is a close association between Buddhism, Khmer cultural traditions, and daily life. Adherence to Buddhism generally is considered intrinsic to the country's ethnic and cultural identity. Most of the remainder of the population (5 million) is made up of ethnic Cham Muslims, who generally are located in Phnom Penh and in rural fishing villages in Kompong Cham, Kompong Chhnang, and Kampot provinces. There are four branches of Islam: The Malay-influenced Shafi branch, which constitutes 90 percent of the Cham Muslims; the Saudi-Kuwaiti influenced Wahabi branch (6 percent); the traditional Iman-San branch (3 percent); and the Kadiani branch (3 percent). The country's small Christian community, although growing, constitutes less than 1 percent of the population. Over 100 separate Christian organizations or denominations operate freely throughout the country and include over 1,000 congregations. Other religious organizations with small followings in Cambodia include the Vietnamese Cao Dai religion and the Baha'i Faith, with about 2,000 practicing members in each group.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by government or private actors. Buddhism is the state religion. The Government promotes national Buddhist holidays, provides Buddhist training and education to monks and others in pagodas and modestly supports an institute that performs research and publishes materials on Khmer culture and Buddhist traditions. The law requires all religious groups, including Buddhists, to submit applications to the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs in order to construct places of worship and to conduct religious activities. Religious groups have not encountered significant difficulties in obtaining approvals for construction of places of worship, but some Muslim and Christian groups report delays by some local officials in acknowledging that official permission has been granted to conduct religious meetings in homes. Such religious meetings generally take place unimpeded despite delay or inaction at the local level, and no significant constraints on religious assembly were reported during the period covered by this report.

Monks can move internally without restriction.

Government officials organize meetings for representatives of all religious groups to discuss religious developments and to address issues of concern.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Foreign missionary groups generally operated freely throughout the country and have not encountered significant difficulties in performing their work; however, there reportedly are occasional local constraints on evangelization by Christians in public places—especially in areas of new Christian religious activity—but these generally are resolved satisfactorily by intervention with provincial or central government authorities. Government officials expressed appreciation for the work of many foreign religious groups in providing much needed assistance in education, rural development, and training. However, government officials also expressed some concern that foreign groups use the guise of religion to become involved in illegal or political affairs.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations generally are amicable between the various religious communities. The Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, and minority religions experience little or no societal discrimination in practice. Adherents of the minority Muslim or Christian faiths reported few societal problems on issues of religion. The Cham Muslims generally are integrated well into society, enjoy positions of prominence in business and in the Government, and face no reported persecution.

In previous years, occasional tensions have been reported among the various branches of Islam, which receive monetary support from groups in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, or Indonesia depending on the tenets of the particular branch. Some Buddhists also have expressed concern about the Cham Muslim community receiving financial assistance from foreign countries.

In addition occasional tensions have been reported when Christian evangelists attempted to remove Buddhist images or religious items from private homes; however, during the period covered by this report there were no reports of tension between Cambodian Christians and non-Christians.

There are ecumenical and interfaith organizations, which often are supported by funding from foreign public or private groups.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy representatives met with some religious leaders and are in contact with representatives of religious nongovernmental organizations and other groups representing the Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian faiths. Embassy representatives have discussed religious freedom with officials from the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs.

CHINA

(Note: The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) is discussed in a separate annex at the end of this report.)

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. Membership in many faiths is growing rapidly; however, while the Government generally does not seek to suppress this growth outright, it tries to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of groups or sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and cracks down on groups that it perceives to pose a threat.

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience worsened, especially for some unregistered religious groups and spiritual movements such as the Falun Gong. The Government intensified its repression of groups that it determined to be "cults" in general, and of the Falun Gong. Various sources report that thousands of Falun Gong adherents have been arrested, detained, and imprisoned, and that approximately 100 or more Falun Gong adherents have died in detention since 1999. The atmosphere created by the nationwide campaign against Falun Gong had a spillover effect on unregistered churches, temples, and mosques in many parts of the country. Separately, under the guise of urban renewal and cracking down on unregistered places of worship, authorities in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province razed an unknown number of churches and temples in late 2000. However, official persecution of underground Catholic and Protestant groups in southeastern China eased somewhat over the previous year.

In general unregistered religious groups continued to experience varying degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. Some unregistered religious groups, including Protestant and Catholic groups, were subjected to increased restrictions, including, in some cases, intimidation, harassment, and detention; however, the degree of restrictions varied significantly from region to region. In some

localities, authorities forced “underground” churches, temples and mosques to close. In other localities, officials worked closely with Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant groups building schools, medical facilities, and retirement centers for poor communities. In the latter cases, local officials frequently encouraged Western religious groups to work in their communities to provide much needed social services, provided that the groups did not openly proselytize, and kept their religious work low-key.

Nevertheless, the basic policy of permitting apolitical religious activity to take place relatively unfettered in Government-approved sites remained unchanged. Many religious adherents report that they are able to practice their faith in officially registered places of worship and to maintain contacts with coreligionists in other parts of the world without interference from the authorities. Official sources, religious professionals, and members of both officially sanctioned and “underground” places of worship all report that the numbers of believers in the country continued to grow.

The communities of the five official religions—Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism—coexist without significant friction; however, in some parts of the country, relations between registered and unregistered Christian churches are tense.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Despite the Government’s decision to suspend the U.S.-China bilateral human rights dialog in May 1999, the Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made concerted efforts to encourage religious freedom. In Washington and in Beijing, in public and in private, U.S. officials repeatedly urged the Government to respect citizens’ rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protested and asked for further information about numerous individual cases of abuse.

In September 2000, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 3.5 million square miles, and its population is approximately 1.3 billion. According to an official government white paper, there are over 200 million religious adherents, representing a great variety of beliefs and practices. Official figures from late 1997, the year for which most recent figures are available, indicate that there are at least 3,000 religious organizations, 300,000 clergy, and 74 training centers for clergy. There also are more than 85,000 approved venues for religious activities. Most religious adherents profess eastern faiths, but tens of millions adhere to Christianity. Approximately 8 percent of the population are Buddhist, approximately 1.4 percent are Muslim, an estimated 0.4 percent belong to the official Catholic Church, an estimated 0.4 to 0.8 percent belong to the unofficial Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church, an estimated 0.8 to 1.2 percent are registered Protestants, and an estimated 2.4 to 6.5 percent worship in Protestant house churches that are independent of government control. There are no available estimates on the number of Taoists; however, according to a 1997 government publication, there are over 10,000 Taoist monks and nuns and over 1,000 Taoist temples.

Widespread traditional folk religions (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors) have been revived and are tolerated to varying degrees as loose affiliates of Taoism or ethnic minority cultural practice. However, at the same time, folk religions have been labeled as “feudal superstition” and are sometimes repressed.

Buddhists make up the largest body of organized religious believers. The Government estimates that there are more than 100 million Buddhists, most of whom are from the dominant Han ethnic group. However, it is difficult to estimate accurately the number of Buddhists because they do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies. The Government reports that there are 13,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries and more than 200,000 nuns and monks.

According to government figures, there are 20 million Muslims, 35,000 Islamic places of worship, and more than 45,000 imams nationwide.

The unofficial, Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church claims a membership far larger than the 5 million persons registered with the official Catholic Church. Precise figures are difficult to determine, but Vatican officials have estimated that there are as many as 10 million adherents. According to official figures, the government-approved Catholic Church has 69 bishops, 5,000 clergy, and approximately 5,000 churches and meeting houses. There are thought to be some 37 bishops operating

“underground,” 10–15 of whom may now be in prison or under house arrest. There are approximately 60,000 Catholic baptisms each year.

The Government maintains that there are between 10 and 15 million registered Protestants, 18,000 clergy, over 12,000 churches, and approximately 25,000 registered Protestant meeting places. According to foreign experts, approximately 30 million persons worship in Protestant house churches that are independent of government control.

Estimates of the number of Falun Gong practitioners vary widely; the Government claims that there may be as many as 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong (or Wheel of the Law), also known as Falun Dafa. Followers of Falun Gong estimate that there are over 100 million adherents worldwide. Some experts estimate that the true number of Falun Gong adherents in China is in the tens of millions. Falun Gong blends aspects of Taoism, Buddhism, and the meditation techniques and physical exercises of qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline) with the teachings of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi, (a native of China who currently is living abroad). Despite the spiritual content of some of Li’s teachings, Falun Gong does not consider itself a religion and has no clergy or places of worship.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship, and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups.

The Criminal Law states that government officials who deprive citizens of religious freedom may, in serious cases, be sentenced to up to 2 years in prison; however, there are no known cases of persons being punished under this statute.

The State reserves to itself the right to register and thus to allow to operate particular religious groups and spiritual movements. There are five officially recognized religions: Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism. For each faith there is a government-affiliated association that monitors and supervises its activities. The State Council’s Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) is responsible for monitoring and judging the legitimacy of religious activity. The RAB and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) United Front Work Department (UFWD), both of which are staffed by officials who rarely, if ever, are religious adherents, provide policy “guidance and supervision” on the implementation of government regulations on religious activity, including the role of foreigners in religious activity.

There are six requirements for the registration of “venues for religious activity”: possession of a physical site; citizens who are religious believers and who regularly take part in religious activity; an organized governing board; a minimum number of followers; a set of operating rules; and a legal source of income. The Government officially permits only those churches affiliated with either the Catholic Patriotic Association or the (Protestant) Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council to operate legally. Some groups register voluntarily, some register under pressure, and the authorities refuse to register others. Unofficial groups claimed that authorities often refuse them registration without explanation. The Government contends that these refusals are mainly the result of these groups’ lack of adequate facilities. Some religious groups have been reluctant to comply with the regulations out of principled opposition to state control of religion or due to fear of adverse consequences if they reveal, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders. In some areas, efforts to register unauthorized groups are carried out by religious leaders and civil affairs officials. In other regions, police and RAB officials, concurrently with other law enforcement agencies, perform registration.

The Government has banned all groups that it has determined to be cults, including the Falun Gong and the Zhong Gong movements. After the Criminal Law came into effect in 1997, offenses related to membership in unapproved religious groups were classified as crimes disturbing the social order. Most experts attribute the subsequent sharp rise in trials for this category of crimes to the new classification.

The Government took some steps during the period covered by this report to show respect for the country’s Muslims, such as offering congratulations on major Islamic holidays. The Government permits, and in some cases subsidizes, Muslim citizens who make the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. According to official government statistics, more than 45,000 Muslims have made the trip to Mecca via neighboring countries, especially Pakistan, in recent years; 5000 in 1998, the last year for which such statistics are available. There have been nongovernmental reports that fewer persons participated in 1999 and 2000; according to some estimates, less than 2,500 persons made the Hajj in each of those years. According to some reports, the major

limiting factors for participation in the Hajj were the cost and controls on passport issuance.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom and freedom of conscience worsened, especially for members of some unregistered religious groups and spiritual movements such as the Falun Gong. The Government intensified its repression of the Falun Gong spiritual movement and "cults" in general. The atmosphere created by the nationwide campaign against Falun Gong had a spillover effect on unregistered churches, temples, and mosques in many parts of the country. The Government tends to perceive unregulated religious gatherings or groups as a potential challenge to its authority. During the period covered by this report, the Government also moved against houses of worship outside its control that grew too large or espoused beliefs that it considered threatening to "state security." Police closed "underground" mosques, temples, and seminaries, as well as large numbers of Catholic churches, and Protestant "house churches," many with significant memberships, properties, financial resources, and networks, and banned groups that it considered to be "cults." An unknown number of places of worship and roadside shrines were destroyed, primarily in Wenzhou.

Overall, the basic policy of permitting apolitical religious activity to take place relatively unfettered in government-approved sites remained unchanged. Official sources, religious professionals, and members of both officially sanctioned and "underground" places of worship all report that the number of religious adherents in the country continued to grow. While the Government generally does not seek to suppress this growth outright, it attempts to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of groups or sources of authority outside the control of Government and the CCP. The Government also makes demands on the clergy or leadership of registered groups, requiring, for example, that they publicly endorse government policies, or denounce Falun Gong.

The Government officially permits only those churches affiliated with either the Catholic Patriotic Association or the (Protestant) Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council to operate legally. Official tolerance for religions considered to be traditionally Chinese, such as Buddhism and Taoism, has been greater than that for Christianity, and these faiths often face fewer restrictions than the other recognized religions. However, as these non-Western faiths have grown rapidly in recent years, there are now signs of greater government concern and new restrictions, especially on syncretic sects (sects that blend tenets from a number of beliefs).

In 1999 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban all groups the Government determined to be "cults," including the Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate also provided "explanations" on applying existing criminal law to the Falun Gong. The law, as applied following these actions, specifies prison terms of 3 to 7 years for "cult" members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications. Under the law, cult leaders and recruiters may be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison.

During the period covered by this report, government restrictions on the Falun Gong spiritual movement continued. There were many thousands of cases throughout the year of individuals receiving criminal, administrative, and extrajudicial punishment for practicing Falun Gong, admitting that they believed in Falun Gong, or simply refusing to denounce the organization or its founder.

Authorities and experts also wrote many articles characterizing the rise of religious groups that failed to register and "cults" such as Falun Gong as part of a plot by the West to undermine Chinese authority. In February, Zhang Xinying, vice chairman of the Chinese Society of Religious Studies, said that the rise of "cults" was due to the frequent abuse of the concept of "religious freedom" by "some people with ulterior motives." Senior Chinese leaders made similar comments, in the context of condemning Falun Gong.

The Authorities also continued their general crackdown on other groups considered to be "cults," such as Xiang Gong, Guo Gong, and Zhong Gong Qigong groups, some of which reportedly had a following comparable to that of the Falun Gong.

The Government continued, and in some places intensified, a national campaign to enforce 1994 State Council regulations and subsequent provincial regulations that require all places of religious activity to register with government religious affairs bureaus and come under the supervision of official, "patriotic" religious organizations. There is a great deal of variation in how local authorities deal with unregistered religious groups. In certain regions, government supervision of religious activity is minimal, and registered and unregistered churches are treated similarly by

the authorities, existing openly side by side. In such areas, many congregants worship in both types of churches. In other regions, particularly where considerable unofficial and official religious activity takes place, local implementing regulations call for strict government oversight of religion, and authorities have cracked down on unregistered churches and their members. Implementing regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and Party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce vigorously government policy regarding unregistered churches.

Underground Protestants and Catholics in the northern and central parts of the country, especially in Beijing, Henan, Hebei, Shaanxi, and Shanxi, reported an increase in efforts to force them to register. Police continued their efforts to close down an underground evangelical group called the "Shouters," an offshoot of a pre-1949 indigenous Protestant group. However, the situation in the southern province of Guangdong improved somewhat during the second half of 2000, following a period of harassment of house churches earlier in the year. Harassment of underground Catholic Churches that occurred in late 1999 and early 2000 in the southeastern province of Fujian, subsided during the period covered by this report.

Local officials destroyed some unregistered places of worship during the year. In late 2000, in the central coastal city of Wenzhou, in Zhejiang Province, officials razed or closed an unknown number of unregistered places of worship. NGO's report that hundreds of places of worship were demolished. Local officials claimed that they had destroyed the churches as part of an urban renewal campaign and a crack-down on unregistered places of worship. However, a government notice posted at the site of at least one church demolition cited the Government's anti-cult law for the action. Authorities maintained that properly registered places of worship would be rebuilt elsewhere. However, observers have noted that a number of the razed churches and temples were not in areas undergoing urban renewal and that many of the buildings had existed for more than 50 years. In addition, local authorities have destroyed thousands of local shrines dedicated to traditional folk religion.

There are reports that, despite the rapidly growing religious population, it is difficult to register new places of worship even for the five officially recognized faiths. The Government has restored or rebuilt churches, temples, mosques, and monasteries damaged or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and allowed the reopening of some seminaries, although implementation of restoration activity has varied from locality to locality. However, there are far fewer temples, churches, or mosques than existed 35 years ago. Some observers cite the lack of adequate meeting space in registered churches as an explanation for the rapid rise in attendance at house churches and "underground" churches.

Many family churches, which generally are made up of family members and friends, conduct activities similar to those of home Bible study groups, and are tolerated by the authorities as long as they remain small and unobtrusive. Family churches reportedly encounter difficulties when their memberships become too large, when they arrange for the use of facilities for the specific purpose of conducting religious activities, or when they forge links with other unregistered groups. However, official harassment of underground Catholic and Protestant groups in South China eased somewhat in 2001.

In some areas there are reports of harassment of churches by local religious affairs bureau officials, attributed, at least in part, to financial issues. For example, although regulations require local authorities to provide land to registered church groups, some local officials may try to avoid doing so by denying registration. Official churches also may face harassment if local authorities wish to acquire the land on which a church is located. In addition to refusing to register churches, there also are reports that religious affairs bureau officials have requested illegal "donations" from churches in their jurisdictions as a means of raising extra revenue.

The Government permitted limited numbers of Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and Buddhist clergy to go abroad for additional religious studies. In most cases, funding for these training programs is provided by foreign organizations. Both official and unofficial Christian churches have problems training adequate numbers of clergy to meet the needs of their growing congregations. Due to the restrictions on religion between 1955 and 1985, no priests or other clergy in the official churches were ordained during that period; most priests and pastors were trained either before 1955 or after 1985. The shortfall is most severe for persons between the ages of 35 and 65. Those deemed too independent reportedly have their budgets cut. Due to government prohibitions, unofficial churches have particularly significant problems training clergy or sending students to study overseas, and many clergy receive only limited and inadequate preparation. Most religious institutions depend on their own resources. Frequently religious institutions run side businesses selling religious items, and at times they run strictly commercial businesses such as restaurants. Contributions from parish members are common among both

Catholics and Protestants. Sometimes the State funds repairs for temples or shrines having cultural or historic significance; however, there are some reports that government funds are allocated only to registered churches, depending upon how independent they are perceived to be.

In 1999 the Party's Central Committee issued a document calling upon the authorities to tighten control over the official Catholic Church and to eliminate the underground Catholic Church if it did not bend to Government control. There has been increasing pressure by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association on underground Catholic bishops to join the official church, and authorities have reorganized dioceses without consulting church leaders. The Government has not established diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and there is no Vatican representative in the country. The Government's refusal to allow the official Catholic Church to recognize the authority of the Papacy in matters of faith and morals has led many Catholics to reject joining the official Catholic Church on the grounds that this denies one of the fundamental tenets of their faith. Catholic priests in the official church also face dilemmas when asked by parishioners whether they should follow Church doctrine about birth control or State family planning policy. This dilemma is particularly acute when discussing abortion.

Tensions between the Vatican and the Government have caused leadership problems for the Catholic Church in the country because of tension between some bishops who have been ordained with secret Vatican approval (or who obtained such secret approval after their ordination) and others ordained without such approval. While both Chinese and Vatican authorities say that they would welcome an agreement to normalize relations, problems concerning the role of the Pope in selecting bishops and the status of "underground" Catholic clerics have frustrated efforts to reach this goal. Some "underground" Catholic priests have indicated they are unwilling to accept the authority of bishops ordained without Vatican approval. Newly nominated bishops seeking unofficial Papal approval frequently find themselves at odds with other church leaders who are sympathetic to the Central Government, and who insist that ordinations of new bishops be conducted by more senior bishops not recognized by the Vatican.

Priests or bishops who served in seminaries were disciplined if they did not overtly support official criticism of the Pope's October 1, 2000, canonization of 120 saints with ties to the country, many of whom had been killed during the Boxer Rebellion. The canonization, which occurred on the anniversary of the founding of the PRC, was seen by the Government as an affront. As disagreements between the Government and the Vatican intensified in 2000, there were reliable reports that the official Catholic seminary in Beijing forced most of its students to attend political training courses in lieu of theology courses. A number of Catholic seminarians who sided with the Vatican in the dispute have resigned in opposition. In addition, foreign teachers at the official Catholic seminary in Xian were forced to leave the country after the head of the seminary criticized the Government's position in its dispute with the Vatican. However, many Catholic teachers at other sites continued to work as teachers.

There are thriving Muslim communities in some areas, but government sensitivity to Muslim community concerns is varied. In areas where ethnic unrest has occurred, particularly among Central Asian Muslims (and especially the Uighurs) in Xinjiang, officials continue to restrict the building of mosques. However, in other areas, particularly in areas traditionally populated by the non-Central Asian Hui ethnic group, there is substantial religious building construction and renovation. After a series of violent incidents in Xinjiang beginning in 1997 and continuing into 2000, including reported bombings in Xinjiang and other parts of the country attributed to Uighur separatists, police crackdown on Muslim religious activity and places of worship accused of supporting separatism in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

Nevertheless, provincial-level Communist Party and Government officials also repeatedly called for stronger management of religious affairs and for the separation of religion from administrative matters. For example, the official Xinjiang Legal Daily newspaper reported in 2000 that in recent years a township in Bay (Baicheng) County had found cases of "religious interference" in judicial, marriage, and family planning matters. In response the authorities began conducting monthly political study sessions for religious personnel and the authorities began to more vigorously implement restrictions on the religious education of youths under the age of 18. In addition they required every mosque to record the numbers and names of those attending each day's activities. The official Xinjiang Daily newspaper reported in 2000 that Yining County had reviewed the activities of 420 mosques, and had implemented a system of linking ethnic minority cadres to mosques in order to improve vigilance against "illegal religious activities." The story reported that the county's persistent propaganda efforts had led a group of 24 women to shed their veils and

raise their level of "civilization." The educational campaign reportedly also had led young ethnic couples who had married illegally in an Islamic betrothal ceremony to seek legal marriage certificates.

Tibetan Buddhists outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) generally appear to have growing freedom to practice their faith. Diplomats have seen pictures of a number of Tibetan religious figures, including the Dalai Lama, openly displayed in parts of Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu. Abbots and monks in those predominately Tibetan areas outside the TAR report they have greater freedom to worship and conduct religious training than their coreligionists within the TAR. However, in June 2001, Chinese authorities ordered thousands of monks and nuns to leave the Larung Gar monastic encampment (also known as the Serthar Tibetan Buddhist Institute), located in the Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. As monks and nuns left, many of their residences were destroyed to prevent them from returning to the site. As many as 7,000 monks and nuns, including approximately 1,000 Han Chinese, resided at Serthar, although the population grew to more than 10,000 during special teachings. Authorities have declared that only 1,400 will be allowed to remain after October 2001. The TIN reported that at the time of their expulsion, many monks and nuns were pressured to sign documents containing three points: a promise not to return, a denunciation of the Dalai Lama, and a commitment to follow official policies. Serthar founder Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, a charismatic and widely revered Buddhist teacher, is in poor health and partially blind. His whereabouts could not be confirmed by the end of the reporting period. (A discussion of government restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism in the TAR can be found in the Tibet annex to this report.)

In a growing number of areas, authorities have displayed increasing tolerance of religious practice by foreigners. Weekly services of the foreign Jewish community in Beijing have been held uninterrupted since 1995, and High Holy Day observances have been allowed for more than 15 years. The Shanghai Jewish community has received permission from authorities to hold services on several occasions, most recently in April 2001, in a historic Shanghai synagogue, which had been restored as a museum. Local authorities remain committed to allowing the use of the synagogue on a case-by-case basis for major holidays. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) meets regularly in a number of Chinese cities, but its membership is strictly limited to the expatriate community.

The authorities permit officially sanctioned religious organizations to maintain international contacts that do not involve "foreign control." What constitutes "control" is not defined. Regulations enacted in 1994, and expanded in September 2000, codified many existing rules involving foreigners, including a ban on proselytizing by foreigners. However, for the most part, the authorities allow foreign nationals to preach to other foreigners, bring in religious materials for personal use, and preach to Chinese citizens at churches, mosques, and temples at the invitation of registered religious organizations. Foreigners legally are barred from conducting missionary activities, but foreign Christians currently teaching English and other languages on college campuses openly profess their faith with minimum interference from authorities, as long as their proselytizing is low key. Many Christian groups throughout the country have developed close ties with local officials, in some cases operating schools and homes for the care of the aged. In addition, Buddhist-run private schools and orphanages in central China also offer professional training courses to teenagers and young adults.

The increase in the number of Christians in the country has resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for Bibles. In 2000 one printing company, a joint venture with an overseas Christian organization, commemorated printing its 25 millionth Bible since its founding in 1987. The organization has printed Bibles in Braille and minority languages, such as Korean, Jingbo, Lisu, Lahu, Miao, and Yao. Although Bibles can be purchased at some bookstores, they are not readily available and cannot be ordered directly from publishing houses by individuals. However, they are available for purchase at most officially recognized churches, in which many house church members buy their Bibles without incident. Nonetheless some underground Christians hesitate to buy Bibles at official churches because such transactions sometimes involve receipts that identify the purchaser. Foreign experts confirm reports of chronic shortages of Bibles, mostly due to logistical problems in disseminating Bibles to rural areas. The situation has improved due to improved distribution channels, including to house churches. Customs officials continued to monitor for the "smuggling" of Bibles and other religious materials into the country. There have been credible reports that the authorities sometimes confiscate Bibles in raids on house churches.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office; however, most influential positions in government are reserved for Party members, and Com-

munist Party officials state that Party membership and religious belief are incompatible. Party membership also is required for almost all high-level positions in government and in state-owned businesses and organizations. The Communist Party reportedly has issued two circulars since 1995 ordering Party members not to adhere to religious beliefs and ordering the expulsion of Party members who belong to religious organizations, whether open or clandestine. High-ranking Communist Party officials, including President and CCP Party Secretary Jiang Zemin, also have stated that Party members cannot be religious adherents. For example, in October 2000, Wang Lequan, secretary of the Xinjiang Party Committee restated to Party members that “cadres at all levels should consciously adhere to Marxist atheism. Do not believe in religion, do not take part in religious activities.” Muslims allegedly have been fired from government posts for praying during working hours. The “Routine Service Regulations” of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) state explicitly that servicemen “may not take part in religious or superstitious activities.” In addition Party and PLA military personnel were expelled for adhering to the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

However, according to government officials, many local Communist Party officials engage in some kind of religious activity; in certain localities, up to 20 to 25 percent of Party officials engage in religious activities. Most officials who practice a religion are Buddhist or practice a folk religion. Religious figures, who are not members of the CCP, are included in national and local government organizations, usually to represent their constituency on cultural and educational matters. The National People’s Congress (NPC) includes several religious leaders, including Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, a Tibetan “living Buddha,” who is a vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Religious groups also are represented in the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, a forum for “multiparty” cooperation and consultation led by the CCP, which advises the Government on policy.

The Government teaches atheism in schools. The participation of minors in religious education is prohibited by regulation. However, enforcement varies dramatically from region to region, and in some areas large numbers of young people attend religious services at both registered and unregistered places of worship. Official religious organizations administer local Bible schools, 54 Catholic and Protestant seminaries, 9 institutes to train imams and Islamic scholars, and institutes to train Buddhist monks. Students who attend these institutes must demonstrate “political reliability” and all graduates must pass an examination on their theological and political knowledge to qualify for the clergy. Some young Uighur Muslims study outside of the country in Muslim religious schools. The Government has stated that there are 10 colleges conducting Islamic higher education and 2 other Islamic schools in Xinjiang operating with government support.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, unapproved religious and spiritual groups came under greater scrutiny and, in many cases, harsh repression—even as officially sanctioned and government-controlled religious activity largely went unaffected. Although there was no significant change in the central government’s official policy toward religious freedom, the unremitting campaign against Falun Gong and other “heretical cults,” plus frequent statements by senior leaders on the need to “strengthen religious work,” had an inevitable spillover effect.

Police killed a number of religious adherents. In December, six Hui Muslims were killed by members of Shandong’s paramilitary People’s Armed Police when they tried to march into Yangxin county to protest anti-Muslim activity there. Central government authorities reacted quickly, punishing several local officials and ordering a number of forums to discuss tolerance. Local Muslim leaders publicly expressed their appreciation for the Government’s intervention, but tensions remain high between Hui and non-Hui members of the community.

In some areas, security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion of “fines,” interrogation, detention, and at times beatings and torture to harass unofficial religious figures and followers. Authorities particularly targeted unofficial religious groups in Beijing and the provinces of Henan and Shandong, in which there are rapidly growing numbers of unregistered Protestants, and in Hebei, a center of unregistered Catholics.

Offenses related to membership in unapproved religious groups are classified as crimes of disturbing the social order. According to the Law Yearbook of China, arrests for disturbing the social order increased dramatically between 1998 and 1999, from 76,500 persons to over 90,000. Most experts agree that this the increase primarily was due to the Government’s crackdown, begun in mid-1999, on qigong groups like Falun Gong, evangelical Christian groups, and localized Buddhist groups such as the Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui) and the Guan Yin (Guanyin

Famin) sect, Protestant house churches, and the clandestine Roman Catholic Church. Leaders of unauthorized groups in particular often are the targets of harassment, interrogations, detention, and physical abuse. For example, in August 2000, police in Jiangsu arrested Shen Chang, the leader of a qigong group, and charged him with tax evasion and organizing gatherings aimed at disturbing social order. Religious groups that preach beliefs outside the bounds of officially approved doctrine (such as imminent coming of the Apocalypse, or holy war) or that have charismatic leaders often are singled out for particularly severe harassment. Some observers have attributed the unorthodox beliefs of some of these groups to under-trained clergy. Others acknowledge that some individuals may be exploiting the re-emergence of interest in religion for personal gain.

Some Protestant house church groups reported in mid-2000 that police raids of worship services and detentions were more frequent than in previous years. In early August 2000, police detained 31 members of an underground Protestant church in Hubei's Guangshui City. A week later, 12 members of an underground Protestant church in Henan were arrested. In late August 2000, police arrested 130 members of a house church headquartered in Fangcheng City, Henan, after they had held services with 3 American members of a Protestant fellowship organization.

Local authorities also use extrajudicial means to punish members of unregistered religious groups. Many religious detainees and prisoners were held. Citizens can be sentenced administratively by a nonjudicial panel of police and local authorities to up to 3 years in prison-like facilities called reeducation-through-labor camps. Qin Baocai and Mu Sheng, colleagues of Protestant house church leader Xu Yongze, continue to serve reeducation-through-labor sentences. The Government's 1997 White Paper on Religious Freedom stated that Xu had promoted a cult, preaching that the Apocalypse was near and asking worshipers to wait in public spaces for several consecutive days. Group members deny these allegations.

In Hebei where an estimated half of the country's Catholics reside, friction between unofficial Catholics and local authorities continued. Hebei authorities have been known to force many underground priests and believers to choose between joining the Patriotic Church or facing punishment such as fines, job loss, periodic detentions, and, in some cases, having their children barred from school. Some Catholics have been forced into hiding. The whereabouts of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, whose followers reported that he was arrested in 1997, remained unclear, despite repeated inquiries from the international community on his status. Underground Catholic sources in Hebei claimed that he still was under detention, while the Government denied having taken "any coercive measures" against him. Reliable sources reported that Bishop An Shuxin, Bishop Zhang Weizhu, Father Cui Xing, and Father Wang Quanjun remained under detention in Hebei. According to several NGOs, a number of Catholic priests and lay leaders were beaten or otherwise abused during the period covered by this report. Underground Catholic Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang of Shanghai remained under surveillance and often had his movements restricted. Roman Catholic Bishop Zeng Jingmu, released from a labor camp in 1998, reportedly was arrested in Jiangxi in September 2000, although the Government denied those reports. The Authorities detained underground bishop Shi Enxiang on Palm Sunday in Beijing, although they later claimed that he had been released. On February 10, 2000, in Fuzhou, Fujian province, a large group of police arrested underground Catholic Bishop Yang Shudao. The Government denied that the elderly Bishop was being detained; in response to official inquiries, they stated that he was receiving medical treatment. By the end of the period covered by this report there had been no new information on his whereabouts or physical condition.

According to some reports, the Government intensified its harsh and comprehensive campaign against the Falun Gong during the early spring of 2001. Since the Government banned the Falun Gong in 1999, the practice of Falun Gong or possession of its literature has been sufficient grounds for practitioners to receive punishments ranging from loss of employment to imprisonment. Some Falun Gong members have been tortured in custody and some have died.

In July 1999, the Government officially declared Falun Gong illegal and began a nationwide repression of the movement. Throughout the country, tens of thousands of practitioners were rounded up and detained for several days—often in open stadiums under poor and overcrowded conditions, with inadequate food, water, and sanitary facilities. Many Falun Gong practitioners lost their jobs or were expelled from universities; Falun Gong practitioners continued to experience discrimination in job and educational opportunities. Falun Gong members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications can be sentenced to three-seven years and leaders up to seven years or more in prison.

Although the vast majority of practitioners detained later were released, those identified by the Government as "core leaders" were singled out for particularly

harsh treatment. In August 2000, the Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau stated that 151 Falun Gong practitioners had been convicted of leaking state secrets, creating chaos, or other crimes. Although more than a dozen Falun Gong members have been sentenced to prison for the crime of “endangering state security,” the great majority of Falun Gong members convicted of crimes by Chinese courts since 1999 have been sentenced to prison for “organizing or using a sect to undermine the implementation of the law,” a less serious offense. Human rights organizations estimate that as many as 300 practitioners have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 18 years for their involvement in Falun Gong. According to the local press, in November several persons accused of printing and distributing Falun Gong literature were arrested in Chaoyan, Liaoning Province. However, the great majority of practitioners have been punished administratively. Although firm numbers are impossible to obtain, many thousands of individuals are serving sentences in reeducation-through-labor camps. Other practitioners have been sent to facilities specifically established to “rehabilitate” practitioners who refuse to recant their belief voluntarily.

According to the Falun Gong, hundreds of its practitioners have been confined to mental hospitals. There have been numerous credible reports of unrepentant Falun Gong practitioners being confined in psychiatric institutions.

Police often used excessive force when detaining peaceful Falun Gong protesters, including some who were elderly or who were accompanied by small children. During the period covered by this report, there were numerous credible reports of abuse and even killings of Falun Gong practitioners by the police and other security personnel, including police involvement in beatings, detention under extremely harsh conditions, and torture (including by electric shock and by having hands and feet shackled and linked with crossed steel chains). Various sources report that since 1997 approximately 100 or more Falun Gong adherents have died while in police custody; many of their bodies reportedly bore signs of severe beatings and/or torture. Others reportedly were cremated before relatives could examine them. Practitioners Li Zaiji and Wang Paisheng died in custody during the first 2 weeks of July 2000, according to one NGO. On June 16, several Falun Gong adherents died under mysterious circumstances at the Wanjila Labor Camp in Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province.

Falun Gong practitioners continued their efforts to overcome government attempts to restrict their right to free assembly, especially in Beijing. However, the number of protests by individuals or small groups of practitioners at Tiananmen Square decreased considerably during the period covered by this report. Demonstrations also continued throughout the country. Most protests were small and short-lived as expanded police units quickly and sometimes violently detained anyone who admitted to being, or appeared to be, a practitioner. Hundreds of Falun Gong practitioners were detained after peaceful protests in Tiananmen Square during the week of July 22, 2000, the anniversary of the Government’s ban on the group. Despite a heavy security presence, on October 1—the anniversary of the founding of the PRC—hundreds, and perhaps more than 1,000, peacefully-protesting practitioners again were arrested in Tiananmen Square, forcing a brief closure of the square. The Government later labeled Falun Gong a reactionary group attempting to subvert the State. On October 26, another mass protest marking the anniversary of the 1999 decision of the National People’s Congress to ban “cults,” including Falun Gong, was held at Tiananmen Square; more than 100 Falun Gong practitioners reportedly were detained. Many allegedly were beaten. Over the next few days, many more practitioners were arrested in Tiananmen Square.

According to press reports, after the January 23 self-immolations of five purported Falun Gong practitioners at a Communist Party work conference, the Government initiated a comprehensive effort to round up practitioners not already in custody, and sanctioned the use of high pressure indoctrination tactics against the group in an effort to force them to renounce Falun Gong. Neighborhood committees, state institutions (including universities), and companies reportedly were ordered to send all known Falun Gong practitioners to intensive anti-Falun Gong study sessions. Even practitioners who had not protested or made other public demonstrations of belief reportedly were forced to attend such classes. Those who refused to recant their beliefs after weeks of intensive anti-Falun Gong instruction reportedly were sent to reeducation-through-labor camps, where in some cases, beatings and torture were used to force them to recant their beliefs; some of the most active Falun Gong practitioners were sent directly to reeducation-through-labor camps. These tactics reportedly resulted in large numbers of practitioners pledging to renounce the movement.

Authorities also briefly detained foreign practitioners, although it remains unclear whether the authorities were aware that such persons were foreigners. For example,

on November 23, Falun Gong practitioner and U.S. resident Teng Chunyan was tried on charges of providing national security information to foreigners, reportedly for providing foreigners with information about the Government's campaign against Falun Gong. On December 12, she was sentenced to 3 years of reeducation-through-labor. Several foreign reporters also were detained briefly on April 25, after having taken photographs of police detaining Falun Gong demonstrators on Tiananmen Square. Foreign tourists routinely had their film and videotape confiscated after recording (often inadvertently) Falun Gong detentions.

The tactic used most frequently by the central government against Falun Gong practitioners has been to make local officials, family members, and employers of known practitioners responsible for preventing Falun Gong activities by individuals. In many cases, practitioners are subject to close scrutiny by local security personnel and their personal mobility is restricted tightly, particularly on days when the Government believes public protests are likely.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The communities of the five official religions—Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism—coexist without significant friction. However, in some parts of the country, there is a tense relationship between registered and unregistered Christian churches. There were reports of divisions within both the official Protestant church and the house church movement over issues of doctrine; in both the registered and unregistered Protestant churches there are conservative and more liberal groups. Credible reports indicated that senior officials at Protestant seminaries are attempting to purge their schools of younger professors sympathetic to more fundamentalist teachings. Defenders of the senior officials characterize the move as an attempt to maintain a more liberal and tolerant approach to church membership. Critics state that senior officials are out of touch with the majority of Chinese Protestants, who tend to be fundamentalist. In other areas, the two groups coexist without problems. In general the majority of the population shows little interest in the affairs of the religious minority beyond visiting temples during festivals or churches on Christmas Eve. Religious/ethnic minority groups such as Tibetans and Uighurs experience societal discrimination, but this is not based solely upon their religious beliefs. Traditionally there also has been tension occasionally between the Han and the Hui, a Muslim ethnic group.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Department of State, U.S. officials in Beijing, and the Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in the country, using both focused external pressure on abuses and support for positive trends within the country. In exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central and local authorities to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protest vigorously whenever there are credible reports of religious harassment or discrimination in violation of international laws and standards; and request information in cases of alleged mistreatment in which the facts are incomplete or contradictory. At the same time, U.S. officials make the case to the country's leaders that freedom of religion can strengthen, not harm, the country. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates also collect information about abuses and maintain contacts in the country's religious communities with a wide spectrum of religious leaders, including bishops, priests, ministers of the official Christian churches, and Taoist, Muslim, and Buddhist leaders. U.S. officials also meet with leaders and members of the unofficial Christian churches. The Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in China, human rights organizations, and religious groups in the United States. The Department of State has sent a number of Chinese religious leaders and scholars to the U.S. on international visitor programs to see firsthand the role that religion plays in the U.S. The Embassy also brings experts on religion from the U.S. to the country to speak about the role of religion in American life and public policy.

In May 1999, the Chinese Government suspended the official U.S. China bilateral human rights dialog. However, in July, the U.S. and China agreed to resume this dialogue.

Nonetheless, government officials occasionally have refused to grant meetings to U.S. Embassy officials who intended to raise religious freedom or other human rights issues. In March government officials refused to meet with U.S. diplomats from the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom. The two diplomats visited the country anyway; however, the Government did not permit religious figures to meet with them. During the same month, members of the independent governmental agency International Religious Freedom Commission were denied visas to visit the country to meet with officials. Despite these limitations, U.S. officials in Washington and Beijing have continued to protest individual incidents of abuse. On numerous occasions, both the Department of State and the Embassy in Beijing protested government actions to curb freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, including the destruction of unregistered churches in Wenzhou, the arrests of Falun Gong followers, the crackdowns on Tibetan Buddhists and on Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, and the arrests of Christian ministers and believers. The lack of improvement in religious freedom in the country was a key factor in the U.S. decision to introduce, once again in 2001, a resolution critical of China's human rights record at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

In September 2000, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Tibet

(This section of the report on China has been prepared pursuant to Section 536(b) of Public Law 103-236. The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)—hereinafter referred to as "Tibet"—to be part of the People's Republic of China. Preservation and development of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and protection of its people's fundamental human rights continue to be of concern.)

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief; however, the Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, they promptly and forcibly suppress those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence or any form of separatism (which the Chinese Government describes as "splittist").

The Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations. Nevertheless, repression of religious freedom in Tibet reached severe levels during the summer of 2000, with serious restrictions imposed on lay practices. However, these restrictions apparently were not enforced as strictly by the end of 2000. The overall level of repression in Tibet remained high, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom remained poor during the period covered by this report.

In the aftermath of the "patriotic education" campaign begun in the mid-1990s, patriotic education activities continued but at a lower level of intensity as the Government declared "success" in increasing control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. However, many persons, including monks and nuns, were arrested for attempting to protest peacefully or for refusing to abide by rules imposed by government authorities in Buddhist monasteries. These rules include the renunciation of the Dalai Lama and the acceptance of Tibet as a part of China. Many other monks and nuns remain in detention, some serving long prison terms, for similar offenses. There were reports of the death of religious prisoners, as well as the imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism.

Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, there is societal pressure aimed at converts, some of whom reportedly have been disinherited by their families.

The U.S. Government continued to make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet, by urging the central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom, by protesting credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination, by discussing cases with the authorities, and by requesting information about specific incidents.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Tibet has a total land area of 471,700 square miles, and according to Government figures, its population is approximately 2.62 million. Most persons practice Tibetan Buddhism to some degree. Many ethnic Tibetan government officials and some eth-

nic Tibetan Communist Party members quietly practice Buddhism. While officials state that there is no Falun Gong activity in the TAR, reports indicate that there are small numbers of practitioners in the region among the ethnic Han population. Small numbers of Tibetan Muslims and Christians also live in the region.

Chinese officials state that Tibet has more than 46,300 Buddhist monks and nuns and approximately 1,787 monasteries, temples, and religious sites. Officials have used these same figures for several years, although the numbers of monks and nuns have dropped at many sites, especially since the beginning of the “patriotic education” campaign in the mid-1990s, which resulted in the expulsion from monasteries and nunneries of many monks and nuns who refused to denounce the Dalai Lama or who were found to be “politically unqualified” to be monks or nuns. These numbers represent only the Tibet Autonomous Region; over 100,000 monks and nuns live in other Tibetan areas of China, including parts of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai Provinces.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. The Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, they promptly and forcibly suppress those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence or any form of separatism (which the Government describes as “splittist”). The authorities also regularly require monks and nuns to make statements overtly supporting government or party policies on religion and history, to pledge themselves to support officially approved religious leaders and reincarnations, and to denounce the Dalai Lama.

The Government continued its harsh rhetorical campaign against the Dalai Lama and his leadership of a “government-in-exile.” The official press continued to criticize vehemently the “Dalai clique,” and in an attempt to undermine the credibility of his religious authority, repeatedly described the Dalai Lama as a “criminal” who was determined to split China. Both the central government and local officials often insist that dialog with the Dalai Lama is essentially impossible, and claim that his actions belie his repeated public assurances that he does not advocate independence for Tibet. Nonetheless the Government asserts that the door to dialog and negotiation is open provided that the Dalai Lama publicly affirms that Tibet is an inseparable part of China. Since 1998, the Government also has required the Dalai Lama to affirm publicly that Taiwan is a province of China.

The Government claims that since 1976 it has contributed sums in excess of \$40 million (approximately 300 to 400 million RMB) toward the restoration of tens of thousands of Buddhist sites, which were destroyed before and during the Cultural Revolution. Government funding of restoration efforts ostensibly was done to support the practice of religion, but also was done in part to promote the development of tourism in Tibet. Most recent restoration efforts were funded privately, although several large religious sites also were receiving government support for reconstruction projects at the end of the period covered by this report.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Buddhist monasteries and pro-independence activism are closely associated in Tibet, and the Government has moved to curb the proliferation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which it charges are a drain on local resources and a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. The Government states that there are no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries, and that each monastery’s democratic management committee (DMC) decides on its own how many monks the monastery can support. However, these committees are government-controlled, and in practice, the authorities impose strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries. The Government has the right to disapprove any individual’s application to take up religious orders, although these restrictions are not always enforced.

Monasteries continue to house and train young monks. Although by regulation monks are prohibited from joining a monastery prior to the age of 18, many younger boys in fact continue the tradition of entering monastic life. However, in some large monasteries young novices, who traditionally served as attendants to older monks while receiving a basic monastic education and awaiting formal ordination, have

been expelled in recent years for being underage. The fact that these novices were not regular members of the monasteries has allowed authorities to deny that there has been a significant decline in the numbers at those sites.

The Government continued to oversee the daily operations of major monasteries. The Government, which does not contribute to monasteries' operational funds, retains management control of the monasteries through the DMC's and the local religious affairs bureaus. In many areas, regulations restrict leadership of the DMC's to "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns and specify that the Government must approve all members of the committees. At some major monasteries, government officials also sit on the committees. Despite these efforts to control the Buddhist clergy and monasteries, antigovernment sentiment remains strong.

In recent years, DMC's at several large monasteries have begun to collect all funds generated by sales of entrance tickets or donated by pilgrims. These funds previously were disbursed to monks engaged in full-time religious study for advanced religious degrees. Such "scholar monks" must now engage in income-generating activities at least part of the time. Several experts are concerned that fewer monks will be qualified to serve as teachers in the future as a result.

In the aftermath of the Government's "patriotic education" campaign, which began in the mid-1990s, patriotic education activities continued but at a lower level of intensity as the Government declared "success" in increasing control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. It did this by enforcing compliance with government regulations, and either cowing or weeding out monks and nuns who refuse to adopt the Party line and remain sympathetic to the Dalai Lama. During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to dispatch work teams to religious sites where they conducted mandatory lessons for monks and nuns. The work teams, which have been largely unsuccessful in changing Tibetans' attitudes, require monks to be "patriotic," and to demonstrate this by signing a declaration agreeing to reject independence for Tibet; rejecting Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama; rejecting and denouncing the Dalai Lama; recognizing the unity of China and Tibet; and not listening to the Voice of America or Radio Free Asia. According to some reports, monks who refused to sign were expelled from their monasteries and were not permitted to return home to work. Others were forced to leave their monasteries after failing to pass political exams associated with the campaigns, and still others left "voluntarily" rather than denounce the Dalai Lama. Monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists deeply resented the Government's efforts. Although there has been some reduction of patriotic education activities throughout the region, religious activities in many monasteries and nunneries were disrupted severely, and monks and nuns have fled to India to escape the campaigns. Approximately 3,000 Tibetans enter Nepal each year to escape conditions in Tibet, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees; one third of these refugees claim that they left because of the "patriotic reeducation" campaigns.

In June 2001, authorities ordered thousands of monks and nuns to leave the Larung Gar monastic encampment (also known as Serthar Tibetan Buddhist Institute), located in the Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. Of the more than 7,000 monks and nuns who resided at Serthar, only 1,400 will be allowed to remain after October 2001 (for more information about this incident, see Section II of the China International Religious Freedom Report).

After the Karmapa, the leader of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kargyu school and one of the most influential religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism, escaped to India in December 1999, authorities increased efforts to exert control over the process for finding and educating reincarnated lamas. The Government approved the selection of 2-year-old Sonam Phuntsog on January 16, 2000, as the seventh reincarnation of the Reting Rinpoche. However, the Dalai Lama, who normally must approve the selection of important religious figures such as the Reting Rinpoche, did not recognize the choice. Many of the monks at Reting Monastery reportedly did not accept the child as the Reting Rinpoche, and he now lives with his family under heavy guard in his residence near the monastery; authorities tightly controlled access to the area. Another young reincarnate lama, Pawo Rinpoche, also lives under house arrest at Nenang Monastery; Pawo Rinpoche, who is approximately seven years of age, was recognized by the Karmapa as the 18th reincarnation of an important Karma Kargyu lineage. He has been denied access to his religious tutors, and authorities reportedly are requiring that he attend a regular Chinese school. Foreigners, including foreign officials, were repeatedly denied permission to visit his monastery.

The Government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy it selected in 1995, is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. The authorities tightly control all aspects of his life, and he has appeared publicly in Beijing and Tibet only on rare

occasions. His public appearances were marked by a heavy security presence. At all other times, the authorities strictly limited access to the boy. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second most prominent figure, after the Dalai Lama.

The ban on the ownership or public display of photographs of the Dalai Lama continued, and such pictures were not readily available except through illegal means. In the spring of 2000, Lhasa area neighborhood committees began sending teams to the homes of ordinary citizens to confiscate books about and pictures of the Dalai Lama. By the end of 2000, these searches no longer were taking place on a regular basis, and a few pictures of the Dalai Lama were again seen in public areas. Similar bans were in effect in Tibetan areas outside the TAR, although by the spring of 2001 the Dalai Lama's portrait was reappearing in shops and religious sites in several regions. However, the Government still banned pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama.

Some 1,000 religious figures hold positions in local people's congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. However, the Government continues to insist that Communist Party members and senior government employees adhere to the Party's code of atheism. A 3-year drive to promote atheism and science, first announced in January 1999 and originally aimed at government workers, continued and was extended to more government offices and to schools. The drive was launched to promote economic progress, strengthen the struggle against separatism, and stem "the Dalai clique's reactionary infiltration." Government officials confirmed that all RAB officers are members of the Communist Party, and that Party members are required to be atheists. However, not all lower level members of the local RAB's are atheists.

During the spring and summer of 2000, in Lhasa and other areas, the authorities increased restrictions on religious activities, prohibiting Communist Party officials and government employees (including such groups as teachers and medical workers) from going into monasteries, visiting the Jokhang Temple, having altars in their homes, participating in religious activities during the Tibetan New Year (Losar), such as placing new prayer flags on their roofs, burning incense and making the traditional "lingkor" (pilgrimage circuit around the sacred sites of Lhasa during the festival of Sagadawa—the most important religious holiday in Tibetan Buddhism). In some areas, many private citizens were also pressured to comply with these restrictions. Some government employees were forbidden to make donations to monks and nuns in Lhasa. Authorities in some parts of Lhasa also searched private homes for religious objects or pictures of the Dalai Lama.

In February 2001, the Tibet Information Network (TIN), an independent news and research service, reported that government workers, cadres and schoolchildren were told to celebrate Losar at home and were not permitted to attend prayer festivals at the monasteries or make financial donations to temples or monasteries. However, despite the clampdown, many pilgrims and other Tibetans still made religious offerings at the main temples in Lhasa. In June 2001, the TIN also reported that Lhasa authorities issued a public notice reinforcing the ban on celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday. In recent years Tibetans have been forbidden to hold traditional incense-burning ceremonies anywhere in Lhasa, and some places of worship were closed on that day. Despite these reports, however, many private citizens and government officials were again participating in religious practices that had been banned six months earlier, such as visiting monasteries, making the "lingkor," and changing the prayer flags on the roofs of their homes during Losar.

Travel restrictions also were reported during the period covered by this report. The Government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials to religious sites, and official foreign delegations had few opportunities to meet monks and nuns not previously approved by the local authorities.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations. Nevertheless, repression of religious freedom in Tibet reached severe levels during the summer of 2000, with serious restrictions imposed on lay practices. However, these restrictions apparently were not enforced as strictly by the end of 2000. The overall level of repression in Tibet remained high, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom remained poor during the period covered by this report.

According to the TIN, at least 26 monks and nuns have died while in detention since 1989, of whom at least 17 had been held in Lhasa's Drapchi Prison. During the period covered by this report, there were additional accounts of prisoner deaths, either while in detention or soon after release. According to unconfirmed reports, Lobsang Sherab, a monk from Sera Monastery, died soon after his release from Lhasa's Sitru detention center in the fall of 2000. He reportedly had been tortured

while in detention, and also was poorly treated when imprisoned in the Trisam re-education center from 1996 to 1998.

Ngawang Lochoe (or Dondrub Drolma), a nun at Sandrup Dolma Lhakang temple, reportedly died in February after serving 9 years of a 10 year sentence for counterrevolutionary propaganda and instigation.

In February 2001, the TIN published a comprehensive study that listed a total of 197 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns detained in China, a majority of whom were imprisoned in the TAR. In April 2000, the director of the TAR Prison Administration Bureau told a visiting foreign delegation that there were over 100 monks and nuns imprisoned in the TAR's three prisons, of whom 90 percent were incarcerated for "endangering state security." There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism. Prisoners who resisted political reeducation imposed by prison authorities, particularly demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy recognized by the Government as the Panchen Lama, were beaten. The TIN reported severe beatings of several nuns serving long prison sentences, including Ngawang Choezom and Phuntsog Nyidrol, imprisoned in 1989 for singing pro-independence songs. Government officials stated that because Phuntsog Nyidrol has shown repentance, her sentence has been reduced by one year. She is scheduled to be released in 2005. Nun Ngawang Sangdrol also was beaten severely on multiple occasions and held in solitary confinement for an extended period. Her prison sentence was extended for a third time in 1998, for taking part in demonstrations in prison, to a total of 21 years. Ngawang Sangdrol's health continues to be of concern, despite government officials' assertions that her health is fine.

The Government continued to control the movements of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama, along with his family. He first disappeared in 1995 when he was six years old. Government officials have claimed that the boy is under government supervision for his own protection and that he lives in Tibet and attends classes as a "normal schoolboy." The location of Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family remains unknown, and all requests from the international community for access to the boy to confirm his whereabouts and his well-being have been refused. In November 1999, the Government denied press reports that Gendun Choekyi Nyima had died and had been cremated secretly; however, the Government continued to refuse international observers access to the boy. In October 2000, Government officials showed members of a foreign delegation two photographs that purportedly depicted the boy. Although the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize the boy identified by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama, Tibetan monks have claimed that they were forced to sign statements pledging allegiance to the boy the Government selected. The Communist Party also urged its members to support the "official" Panchen Lama.

According to credible reports, Chadrel Rinpoche, who was accused by the Government of betraying state secrets while helping the Dalai Lama choose the incarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, was imprisoned in a secret compound of a Sichuan prison in 1995. In 2000, the Government told a visiting foreign delegation that he was "fine physically." Chadrel Rinpoche's original prison sentence ended in May 2001, but he remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

Following the December 1999 flight of the Karmapa, Ugyen Trinley Dorje, to India, authorities restricted access to the Tsurphu Monastery, the seat of the Karmapa, and reportedly increased "patriotic education" activities there. In several public statements, the Karmapa stated that he left because of controls on his movements and the refusal either to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or to allow his mentors to come to him. Following his flight, the TIN reported that at least two Tsurphu monks were arrested and that the Karmapa's parents were placed under surveillance. Government officials denied that there were any arrests or that the Karmapa's parents have faced restrictions of any kind. Nonetheless, in January 2001 the TIN reported that conditions at Tsurphu remain tense, with a permanent police presence and intensified restrictions on monks that appear to be aimed at discouraging them from following their spiritual teacher into exile. The TIN also reported that no new monks are being permitted to enter the monastery. In December 2000, foreign officials were allowed to visit the Tsurphu Monastery, where approximately 325 monks were said to be in residence. There were few other visitors at the time; however, religious activity was observed.

There were reports that a few practitioners of Falun Gong have been detained in Tibet since Falun Gong was banned in July 1999. The official press reported that steps were also taken to stop the practice of Zhong Gong among PLA troops stationed in the TAR.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, there is societal pressure aimed at converts, some of whom reportedly have been disinherited by their families.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu made a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet. In regular exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, U.S. diplomatic personnel consistently urged both central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibet. Embassy officials protested and sought further information on cases whenever there were credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination. U.S. diplomatic personnel stationed in the country also regularly applied for permission to travel to Tibet to monitor conditions, including the status of religious freedom; however, the authorities were increasingly unwilling to allow such travel during the period covered by this report. U.S. officials maintain contacts with a wide spectrum of religious figures, and the U.S. Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in Tibet and religious groups in the United States. The U.S. Embassy, including the Ambassador and other senior officers, raised the cases of religious prisoners and reports of religious persecution with government officials. Senior embassy officials met regularly with the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau and raised cases during those discussions; including those of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, Abbot Chadrel Rinpoche, Ngawang Sangdrol, and other Tibetan monks and nuns. Other embassy officers raised specific cases in meetings with officials from the State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau and the Party's United Front Work Department.

Hong Kong

The Basic Law (Hong Kong's mini-constitution) provides for freedom of religion, Hong Kong's Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination, and the Government generally respects these provisions in practice. Although part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since its July 1, 1997, reversion to PRC sovereignty, Hong Kong enjoys autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the "one country, two systems" concept that defines Hong Kong's relationship to the rest of China.

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 mainland Government and its representatives in Hong Kong opposed the activities of some Hong Kong religious and spiritual groups and individuals; however, Hong Kong authorities adhered to Hong Kong law and did not restrict those groups' activities. The Hong Kong Government's study of possible "anti-sect" legislation has raised concerns about possible Hong Kong Government action against the Falun Gong.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Six of the largest religious groups long have collaborated in a collegium on community affairs and make up a joint conference of religious leaders.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Consulate General officers meet regularly with religious leaders.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Hong Kong occupies 422 square miles on more than 200 islands and the mainland, and its population is approximately 6.8 million. Approximately 43 percent of the population participate in some form of religious practice. The two largest religions are Buddhism and Taoism. Approximately 5 percent of the population are Protestant, 4 percent are Roman Catholic, and 1 percent are Muslim. There also are small numbers of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews. Falun Gong representatives in Hong Kong state that their practitioners number approximately 500.

There are 1,300 Protestant congregations representing 50 denominations. The Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination, followed by the Lutherans. Other major denominations include Seventh-Day Adventists, Anglicans, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of Christ in China, Methodist, Pentecostal and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

There are approximately 600 Buddhist and Taoist temples, approximately 800 Christian churches and chapels, 4 mosques, a Hindu temple, a Sikh temple, and a synagogue. The Catholic population is served by 337 priests, 89 monks, and 530 nuns with traditional links to the Pope. More than 290,000 children are enrolled in 322 Catholic schools and kindergartens. The Assistant Secretary General of the Federation of Asian Bishops' conference has his office in Hong Kong. Protestant churches run 3 colleges and over 700 schools. Religious leaders tend to focus primarily on local spiritual, educational, social, and medical needs. However, some religious leaders and communities maintain active contacts with their mainland and international counterparts. Catholic and Protestant clergy have been invited to give seminars on the mainland, to teach classes there, and to develop two-way student exchanges; however, some mainland students have had difficulty obtaining approval from PRC authorities to depart mainland China. Numerous foreign missionary groups operate in and out of Hong Kong.

There has been marked growth in the number of independent churches since the 1970's.

A wide range of faiths is represented in the government, the judiciary, and the civil service. A large number of influential non-Christians receive Christian education.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law (Hong Kong's mini-constitution, which spells out the "one country, two systems" concept) provides for freedom of religion, the Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination by the Government, and the Government generally respects these provisions in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects religious freedom in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. Although part of the PRC since its July 1, 1997, reversion to PRC sovereignty, Hong Kong enjoys autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the "one country, two systems" concept that defines Hong Kong's relationship to the rest of China. The Government does not recognize a state religion, and a wide range of faiths is represented in the Government, the judiciary, and the civil service.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government and are exempted specifically from the Societies Ordinance, which requires the registration of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). Catholics recognize the Pope as the head of the Catholic Church. The spiritual movement widely known as Falun Gong, which does not consider itself a religion, is registered, practices freely, and holds regular public demonstrations against PRC policies. For example, Falun Gong practitioners held an international conference in a government-owned facility in January, held a number of public protests during President Jiang Zemin's visit in May, and regularly organized public demonstrations outside PRC offices. Other qigong groups, including Zhong Gong (which was banned in the PRC in late 1999), Xiang Gong, and Yan Xin Qigong, also are registered and practice freely in Hong Kong. Another group allegedly listed as an "evil cult" by the PRC, the Taiwan-based Guan Yin Method, also is registered legally and practices freely as well.

The Home Affairs Bureau is responsible for religion-related policy, but functions basically as a contact point for liaison and exchange of views. If a religious group wants to purchase a site to construct a school or hospital, it works with the Lands Department; otherwise, church-affiliated schools work with the Education and Manpower Bureau and church-affiliated hospitals work with the Health and Welfare Bureau. Draft educational reforms still under public discussion would require management committees of government-subsidized schools, including religious-sponsored ones, to allow broader community participation. Some religious groups that run schools have expressed concern over a required reduction, from 100 to 60 percent, of the committee members who can be named by the sponsoring body, thereby reducing a church's control over a given school's management.

Representatives of 6 of the largest religious groups (Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Anglican) comprise 40 members of the 800-member Election Committee, which chooses Hong Kong's Chief Executive and a number of Legislative Council members.

The Government grants public holidays to mark numerous special days on the traditional Chinese and Christian calendars, as well as Buddha's birthday.

Religious groups have a long history of cooperating with the Government on social welfare projects. For example, the Government often funds the operating costs of schools and hospitals built by religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although under the Basic Law the PRC Government has no say over religious practices in Hong Kong, its leaders, official PRC representatives in Hong Kong and the two PRC-owned newspapers in Hong Kong have criticized some Hong Kong religious and other spiritual groups and individuals. One Basic Law provision calls for ties between Hong Kong religious organizations and their mainland counterparts to be based on “nonsubordination, noninterference and mutual respect.” Hong Kong religious leaders have noted that this provision could be used to limit such ties. In April 2000, mainland authorities reportedly accused a Hong Kong religious leader with violating this noninterference clause by criticizing mainland religious policies; since then, that leader has not been able to secure permission from PRC authorities to visit China. Many of the Hong Kong Catholic Church’s contacts and exchanges with its mainland counterparts in the official Catholic church remained on hold because of tight restrictions on religious groups imposed by the PRC government. However, the traditional ties of the Hong Kong Catholic Church to the Vatican have not precluded its contacts with the official Catholic Church in the PRC.

In September 2000, Hong Kong-based Chinese officials urged Hong Kong’s Catholic Church to keep “low key” its celebrations of the October 1 canonization by the Pope of 120 foreign missionaries and Chinese Catholics who had been martyred in China. However, the Hong Kong Catholic Church stated that it would not alter its fairly extensive plans to mark the occasion.

Although Falun Gong remains free to practice, organize, and conduct public demonstrations, concern about pressure from mainland authorities and their supporters to limit the group’s activities increased during the period covered by this report. Articles critical of the group were published in PRC-owned Hong Kong newspapers. In December 2000 in Macau, PRC President Jiang Zemin stated that the Macau Government should not allow anyone to stage any activities in Macau against the Central Government or to split the country in any way; in his speech he made it clear that his comments applied equally to Hong Kong and Macau. The number of Falun Gong practitioners in Hong Kong is said to have dropped from around 1,000 to about 500 since the mainland crackdown began in mid-1999. Some Hong Kong publishing houses owned by mainland Chinese interests declined to continue publishing Falun Gong materials after the movement was banned on the mainland in July 1999, and some bookstores run by Chinese enterprises removed Falun Gong books from their shelves. In addition, Falun Gong organizers have reported reluctance on the part of some hotels, cultural centers, and other venues to lend or lease space for Falun Gong exhibitions or other activities. An international Falun Gong conference held at a Government-owned facility in January drew intense criticism by pro-PRC organizations.

Since the conference, there have been concerns about the possibility of the Hong Kong government taking action against the Falun Gong. Senior Hong Kong leaders have stated that the group is “no doubt an evil cult,” and stated that the Government would not let the Falun Gong “abuse Hong Kong’s freedoms and tolerance to affect public peace and order” in Hong Kong or in the mainland. Officials also have labeled the group “fanatical, superstitious, and devious.” In the period prior to President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Hong Kong for a major international business conference in May, the Hong Kong Government claimed that the local Falun Gong practitioners’ plan for demonstrations during the visit was “a deliberate move to undermine the relationship between Hong Kong and the central government.” The Hong Kong Government also barred entry into Hong Kong of approximately 100 Falun Gong practitioners, most of whom were from the United States, Australia, the UK and Taiwan. The Government cited undefined “security reasons” for the entry bans and denied that its actions were based on the individuals’ religious beliefs or membership in any particular organization. Nonetheless, several hundred local and foreign Falun Gong practitioners were allowed to demonstrate freely on numerous occasions and at numerous venues during President Jiang’s visit. Immediately following the May conference, concerns arose when press reports cited unnamed officials who claimed that the Hong Kong Government planned to propose “anti-cult” legislation. The Hong Kong Government confirmed that it was studying the possibility, but stated that it had “no plans at present” to introduce such legislation.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable; however, a few Hong Kong Buddhist leaders and one evangelical Christian leader have issued statements critical of Falun Gong and warned against the danger of "cults."

Two ecumenical bodies facilitate cooperative work among the Protestant churches and encourage local Christians to play an active part in society. Six of the largest religious groups (Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Muslim) long have collaborated in a collegium on community affairs and make up the joint conference of religious leaders.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Consulate General officers at all levels have made clear U.S. Government interests in the full protection and maintenance of freedom of religion, conscience, expression, and association. Consulate General officers meet regularly with religious leaders and community representatives.

Macau

On December 20, 1999, Macau reverted from Portuguese to Chinese administration (the handover) and became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) with a high degree of autonomy. The Basic Law (mini-constitution) and 1998 Religious Freedom Ordinance provide for freedom of religion and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious practice, and the Macau SAR Government generally respects these rights in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. While in general the Government does not interfere with the practices of Falun Gong, a spiritual movement that does not consider itself a religion, police harassed some practitioners in public parks during the period covered by this report. During the handover anniversary ceremonies in December 2000, police prevented foreign (i.e. non-Macau), practitioners of Falun Gong from entering Macau.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. American officials assigned to the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong, which has responsibility for covering Macau, meet regularly with Macau religious leaders.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Macau, on the south China coast, has a total area of 13 square miles and its population is approximately 450,000. According to 1996 census figures, of the more than 355,000 persons surveyed, 60.9 percent had no religious affiliation, 16.8 percent were Buddhist, 6.7 percent were Roman Catholic, 1.7 percent were Protestant, and 13.9 percent were "other" (a combination of Buddhists, Taoists, and followers of Confucianism). The number of active Falun Gong practitioners declined from approximately 100 persons to about 20 after the movement was banned in the PRC in July 1999.

Members of the Government, the judiciary, and the civil service belong to a wide range of faiths.

Missionaries are active in Macau, and represent a wide range of faiths with a majority being Catholic.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

On December 20, 1999, Macau reverted from Portuguese to Chinese sovereignty and became a SAR of the PRC. The Basic Law—the mini-constitution—provides for freedom of conscience, freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach and to con-

duct and participate in religious activities. The July 1998 Freedom of Religion Ordinance, which continued to apply after the handover, provides for freedom of religion, privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education. The Macau SAR Government generally respects these rights in practice although there was at least one exception. There is no state religion.

The Religious Freedom Ordinance requires the registration of religious organizations. This is handled by the SAR's Identification Services Office. There have been no reports of discrimination in the registration process.

Missionaries are free to conduct missionary activities and are active in Macau. More than 30,000 children are enrolled in Catholic schools, and a large number of influential non-Christians have received a Christian education. Religious entities may use electronic media to preach.

The Freedom of Religion Ordinance stipulates that religious groups may maintain and develop relations with religious groups abroad.

The Catholic Church recognizes the Pope as the head of the Church. In April 2001, the Holy See appointed a coadjutor Bishop for the Macau diocese. Editorials in the local Catholic newspaper noted this as an example of the SAR's Government's independence and respect for religious freedom as provided for in the Basic Law.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Practitioners of Falun Gong have not applied for registration with the Identification Services Office because a Macau lawyer advised them that their application for registration would not be approved as the Falun Gong was banned in the PRC in July 1999. The Identification Services Office has not issued any instructions regarding the Falun Gong, and senior SAR Government officials have reaffirmed that local practitioners of Falun Gong may continue their legal activities without government interference.

According to Falun Gong practitioners, the group's materials, available for sale in two Macau stores before Falun Gong was banned on the mainland in July 1999, were removed from the shelves by store management. However, the Government has taken no action to limit their availability.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, Falun Gong practitioners continued their daily exercises in public parks; however, they were subjected to periodic harassment by the police. Police photographed practitioners and occasionally checked their identification documents. On at least one occasion, the police took a practitioner to the police station to check his documents rather than conducting the check on site.

In December 2000, Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Macau to celebrate the 1-year anniversary of Macau's return to Chinese sovereignty. During his visit, Jiang stated that the Macau Government should not allow anyone to stage any activities in Macau against the Central Government or to split the country in any way. Dozens of Falun Gong practitioners and democracy activists from Hong Kong, Australia and the United Kingdom were barred from entering the SAR during the visit. Macau authorities claimed that this was because they were planning to participate in an illegal demonstration. The Public Assembly Law grants Macau residents, but not foreigners or PRC nationals resident outside of Macau, the right to demonstrate. Police at the port of entry allegedly beat one Australian practitioner. A government investigation into the incident rejected allegations of police brutality, and the practitioner did not appeal the results. Local practitioners were allowed to demonstrate at a park about a mile from the anniversary celebrations in December 2000.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable. Citizens generally are very tolerant of other religious views and practices. Public ceremonies and dedications often include prayers by both Christian and Buddhist groups.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Officers from the Consulate General in Hong Kong protested the harassment of Falun Gong practitioners in December 2000 and January 2001, stating that the ability of Falun Gong practitioners in Macau to practice without restriction is an important element of religious freedom, civil liberties and autonomy. Officers from the Consulate General in Hong Kong meet regularly with Macau religious leaders.

TAIWAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the authorities generally respect 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The American Institute in Taiwan discusses religious freedom issues with the authorities in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Taiwan is a group of islands with a total land area of approximately 13,800 square miles located in the Western Pacific Ocean off the east coast of mainland China. It has a population of approximately 22.5 million. While reliable statistics are not available, it can be estimated from registration statistics that of the population approximately 22 percent are Buddhist; 22 percent are Taoist; 4 percent follow I Kuan Tao; 2 percent are Protestants; 1.5 percent are Roman Catholics; 1 percent follow Tien Li Chao (Heaven Reason Religion); 1 percent follow Tien Ti Chiao (Heaven Emperor Religion); 1 percent follow Tien Te Chiao (Heaven Virtue Religion); 0.7 percent follow Li-ism; 0.6 percent follow Hsuan Yuan Chiao (Yellow Emperor Religion); and 0.02 percent are Sunni Muslim. Statistics are not available for other religious groups present in Taiwan including Confucianism, Ta I Chao (Great Changes Religion), and Hai Tzu Chiao (Innocent Child Religion). It also has been estimated by knowledgeable observers that almost 14 percent of the population are atheist. Among the Protestants, the following denominations are represented among the population: Presbyterians; True Jesus; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons); Baptists; Lutherans; Seventh-Day Adventists; Episcopalians; and Jehovah's Witnesses. There also are small numbers of adherents of Judaism, the Baha'i Faith, and the Mahikari religion. More than 70 percent of the indigenous population are Christian. The majority of religious adherents either are Buddhist or Taoist, but a large percentage consider themselves both Buddhist and Taoist. Approximately 50 percent of the population regularly participates in some form of organized religious practice.

In addition to practicing another religion, many persons also follow a collection of beliefs that are deeply ingrained in Chinese culture, and which can be referred to as "traditional Chinese folk religion." These beliefs include, but are not limited to, shamanism, ancestor worship, magic, ghosts and other spirits, and aspects of animism. This folk religion may overlap with an individual's belief in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, or other traditional Chinese religions. There also may be an overlap with the practitioners of Falun Gong, the numbers of which have grown rapidly during the period covered by this report to as many as 100,000. Observers have estimated that as many as 80 percent of the population believes in some form of traditional folk religion.

Religious beliefs cross political and geographical lines. Members of Taiwan's political leadership practice various faiths, including minority religions.

Foreign missionary groups are active in Taiwan, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the authorities generally respect this right in practice. The authorities at all levels generally protect this

right in full, and do not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Sixteen religious organizations have registered with the Ministry of the Interior, although registration is not mandatory. Religious organizations may register with the central authorities through their island-wide associations under the Temple Management Law, the Civic Organizations Law, or the chapter of the Civil Code that governs foundations and associations. While individual places of worship may register with local authorities, many choose not to register and operate as the personal property of their leaders. Registered organizations operate on a tax-free basis and are required to make annual reports of their financial operations. In the past, concern over abuse of tax-free privileges or other financial misdeeds occasionally prompted the authorities to deny registration to new religions whose doctrines were not clear, but there were no reports that the authorities sought to deny registration to new religions during the period covered by this report.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely.

The Ministry of the Interior promotes interfaith understanding among religious groups by sponsoring symposiums, or helping to defray the expenses of privately sponsored symposiums on religious issues.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The authorities' policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

Religious instruction is not permitted at the elementary, middle, or high school levels in public or private schools which have been accredited by the Ministry of Education. Religious organizations are permitted to operate schools, but religious instruction is not permitted in those schools if they have been accredited by the Ministry of Education. If the schools are not formally accredited by the Ministry of Education, then they may provide religious instruction. High schools may provide general courses in religious studies, and universities and research institutions have religious studies departments. Religious organizations operate theological seminaries.

There are no religious prisoners or detainees.

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 authorities' refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In July 2000, the authorities implemented legislation providing for a civilian alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. The law benefited members of the Watchtower Society and others who previously had been imprisoned for failing to follow orders while in military service. In December 2000, the President granted a special amnesty to, and released, 19 conscientious objectors who had been imprisoned for refusing military service on religious grounds.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Taiwan Council for Religion and Peace, the China Religious Believers Association, and the Taiwan Religious Association are private organizations that promote greater understanding and tolerance among adherents of the different religions. These associations and various religious groups occasionally sponsor symposiums to promote mutual understanding.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The American Institute in Taiwan is in frequent contact with representatives of human rights organizations and occasionally meets with leaders of various religious communities.

EAST TIMOR

During the period covered by this report, East Timor was governed by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Elections for a constituent assembly charged with producing East Timor's first constitution were scheduled for August 30, 2001; however, by the end of the period covered by this

report, the date of independence remained uncertain. UNTAET regulations provide for freedom of religion, and UNTAET generally respects this right in practice.

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

The Catholic Church is the dominant religious institution in East Timor. Attitudes toward the small Protestant and Muslim communities vary, given the previous association of these groups with the occupying Indonesian military forces.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with UNTAET in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

East Timor, which comprises approximately 5,406 square miles, shares the island of Timor with Indonesia's bordering Nusa Tenggara province. Based on the civil registration carried out by UNTAET from March to June 2001, the population of the territory was 739,652. According to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, as many as 50,000 to 80,000 East Timorese remained across the border in West Timor by the end of the period covered by this report. The population of East Timor overwhelmingly is Catholic. According to statistics issued by the former Indonesian administration in 1992, approximately 90 percent of East Timorese were registered officially as Catholics, approximately 4.0 percent as Muslim, 3.0 percent as Protestant, and approximately 0.5 percent as Hindu. There are no figures available on the number of Buddhists in the country. However, the above statistics may not be completely accurate because under the Indonesian administration, every resident was required to register as an adherent to one of Indonesia's five recognized religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism). A significant percentage of those registered as Catholics probably were better described as animists, a category not recognized by the Indonesian government.

It is likely that the number of Protestants, Muslims, and Hindus has declined markedly since September 1999, since these groups were associated strongly with the prointegration side. The Indonesian military forces formerly stationed in East Timor included a significant number of Protestants in their ranks, who played a major role in establishing Protestant churches in the territory. Less than half of those congregations still existed after September 1999, and many East Timorese Protestants remained in West Timor at the end of the period covered by this report. East Timor also had a significant Muslim community during the Indonesian occupation, mostly comprised of ethnic Malay immigrants from Indonesian islands. Only a few hundred of these Muslims returned to East Timor following the September 1999 devastation after the vote for autonomy from Indonesia, and most of them reside at or in close proximity to the mosque in Dili. In addition there is a small community of East Timorese Muslims of Arabic descent that has been integrated well into East Timorese society since Portuguese times.

A small number of Christian missionary groups operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

UNTAET regulations provide for freedom of religion and UNTAET generally respects this right in practice. The administration at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

UNTAET Regulation no. 1999/1 establishes the overall legal structure that protects religious freedom and all other human rights in the territory. Section Two of this regulation stipulates that all persons undertaking public duties or holding public office in East Timor shall observe internationally recognized human rights standards and adds that "they shall not discriminate against any person on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national community, property, birth or all other status." The provision specifically references the human rights standards reflected in a number of international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Until replaced by UNTAET regulations or subsequent legislation by democratically elected institutions of East Timor, the laws applied in East Timor prior to October 25, 1999, i.e., the Indonesian laws, remain in effect, insofar as they do not conflict with the observance of internationally recognized standards as outlined above. (The requirements of Indonesian law that each citizen be a member of one

of Indonesia's officially recognized religion does violate the freedom of religion provisions of the UDHR and the ICCPR, and thus no longer is applicable in East Timor.)

Catholicism is the dominant religion of East Timor and the list of designated public holidays reflects this, including Good Friday, Assumption Day, All Saint's Day, Day of the Immaculate Conception, and Christmas Day.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

UNTAET's policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, there were no arrests in cases related to societal religious violence or attacks against churches and mosques (see Section III). UNTAET's ability to respond to such attacks was hindered by insufficient prison space and judicial and police resources. In addition UNTAET's tendency to encourage local reconciliation rather than punishing offenders was an additional factor behind its decision not to charge perpetrators of religious attacks.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 UNTAET's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The Catholic Church is the dominant religious institution in East Timor and its priests and bishops are accorded the highest respect in local society. Attitudes toward the small Protestant and Muslim communities vary, given the previous association of these groups with the occupying Indonesian forces. Resentment of Muslims is based on ethnic and economic differences, in addition to the religion.

In March 2001, a mob burned the mosque in Baucau during a wave of general unrest and destruction in that city. It was believed that residents might have targeted the mosque as a result of local animosity toward a Jordanian Rapid Reaction Unit based nearby. On December 31, 2000, local gangs attacked and vandalized the area around the mosque that harbors Dili's small Malay Muslim community, injuring three persons. The mosque members' resistance to the gang's demand for a car apparently precipitated the violence.

At times Protestants also have been harassed; however, during the period covered by this report, there were no further attacks on Protestant churches such as those that occurred in June 2000, in Aileu district.

A lack of prison space, inadequate judicial and police resources, and a tendency to encourage local reconciliation rather than punishment of offenders were factors behind the decision of UNTAET authorities not to charge perpetrators of violence or attacks on churches and mosques (see Section II). In the case of the June 2000 Aileu incidents, the authorities and local churchmen promoted reconciliation between the local Protestant and Catholic communities, and the local Catholic Church took the lead in a project to rebuild three destroyed Protestant churches.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom issues with UNTAET in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

FIJI

The 1997 Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the caretaker Government generally respected this right in practice. In February 2001, the Court of Appeals found that the Constitution remains in force, despite its purported abrogation by insurgent forces in mid-2000.

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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country consists of over 300 islands, 100 of which are inhabited, with most of the population concentrated on the main island of Viti Levu. The country's total land area is approximately 6,800 square miles, and its population is approximately 800,000 persons, according to information from the Bureau of Population in 2001. Among the three major religions, there are 449,482 Christians, 264,173 Hindus, and 54,323 Muslims. The largest Christian denomination is the Methodists, claiming 218,000 members. The Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations also have significant followings. The Methodist Church is supported by the majority of the country's chiefs and remains influential in the ethnic Fijian community, particularly in rural areas.

Religion runs largely along ethnic lines. The population is split largely between two main ethnic groups: Indigenous Fijians constitute approximately 51 percent, and Indo-Fijians constitute 44 percent. Most Indo-Fijians practice Hinduism; most indigenous Fijians follow Christianity. The European community is predominantly Christian. Other ethnic communities include Chinese and European persons.

The Hindu faith is predominant within the Indo-Fijian community. The Muslim (Sunni) minority makes up approximately 10 percent of the Indo-Fijian community. Both the Hindu and Muslim communities have a number of active religious and cultural organizations. There are a number of small cult-like organizations.

There are numerous Christian missionary organizations that are active nationally and regionally in social welfare, health, and education. Many major Christian denominations and notably the Methodist Church have missionaries in the country; they operate numerous religious schools, including colleges, which are not subsidized by the Government.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1997 Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the present caretaker Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse. There is no state religion, although the Methodist Church is working to establish a Christian state. Religious groups are not required to register. The Government does not restrict foreign clergy and missionary activity or other typical activities of religious organizations.

Major observances of all three major religions are celebrated as national holidays, including Christmas, Easter, Diwali, and Mohammed's birthday. The Government partly sponsors an annual ecumenical prayer festival.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, the role of religion continues to be a political issue. Methodist Church authorities and allied political parties continue to work for the establishment of a Christian state. The Church has displayed strong nationalist sympathies, and a letter of support from the head of the Methodist Church, Reverend Tomasi Kanilagi, to George Speight, the leader of the May 19, 2000 armed takeover of Parliament, was made public in the press in June 2001. In the letter, Reverend Kanilagi publicly expressed his intention to use the Methodist Church as a forum under which to unite all ethnic Fijian political parties for the elections scheduled for August 2001. The meetings held for this purpose have not been subjected to the same stringent permit restrictions as other political gatherings. Those parties dominated by Indo-Fijians do not support the establishment of a Christian state and insist that church and state should remain separate.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While in general relations are cordial between the two major religious communities (Christian and Hindu), there were two incidents of vandalism directed against Hindu places of worship, in May and June 2001. The Hindu religious group Sanatan indicated that it believes that these attacks were isolated incidents and not indic-

ative of greater intolerance. A Muslim Indo-Fijian community exists within the Indo-Fijian community.

Civil society is heavily Christian, and the New Testament is quoted frequently in letters to newspaper editors. Christian religious sources have stated several times that their view on religious tolerance is that it is “not a matter of being Christian, but instead accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior.”

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy has disseminated public diplomacy materials related to political and religious freedom across a wide spectrum of society. The Embassy continued to make religious freedom an important part of its effort to promote democracy and human rights.

INDONESIA

The Constitution provides for religious freedom for members of officially recognized religions and belief in one supreme God, and the Government generally respects these provisions; however, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity and unrecognized religions. The law officially “embraces” five religions—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism; however, on June 1, 2001, the Government lifted its remaining ban on the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and in January 2000, President Abdurrahman Wahid lifted the ban on the practice of Confucianism that had existed since 1967. While only these religions are recognized officially, the law also states that other religions are not forbidden.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Christians complained that it was difficult to obtain the necessary permits to build new churches or to expand existing churches. The Government failed to respond effectively to violence perpetrated and encouraged by radical groups claiming to represent certain religious views. Despite the Government’s reputation for promoting religious tolerance, the Government was not able to halt the sectarian violence or rein in religious extremism. Religious violence and the lack of an effective government response to punish perpetrators and prevent further attacks continued to lead to allegations that officials were complicit in some of the incidents or, at a minimum, allowed them to occur with impunity. In the Moluccas, where numerous churches were attacked, the Government only investigated a few cases thoroughly, and there were no reports that any perpetrators were punished.

Religious intolerance, especially on the part of extreme Muslims towards religious minorities, including Christians, increasingly was evident and became a matter of growing concern to many religious minority members and Muslim moderates. The violence included repeated attacks on entertainment centers in Jakarta by Islamic groups during the Muslim fasting month on the grounds that such centers promoted “vice” and violated Muslim values and law. The lack of religious tolerance continued to manifest itself in scores of violent incidents in the Moluccas, including forced conversions and killings of individuals because of their religious affiliations. There were credible reports that several hundred Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity in North Maluku in early 2000 and thousands of Christians were forced to convert to Islam in North Maluku and Maluku provinces during the period covered by this report and in previous reporting periods. Religious intolerance also manifested itself in numerous attacks on churches in various locations throughout the country, ranging from minor damage to total destruction. Mosques also were attacked in Maluku Province. While in the past the victims in the Moluccas conflict were equally divided between Christians and Muslims, most of the estimated 1,200 victims during the period covered by this report were Christian.

The United States discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Government actively engaged with religious leaders and the Ministry of Religion and facilitated a number of interfaith seminars, dialogs, and workshops. These activities involved Indonesian government officials and civil society organizations and addressed mutual concerns, in particular, the forced conversions of Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas, and the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in a pluralistic society and democracy.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an archipelago of 17,000 islands covering a total area of approximately 1.8 million square miles (approximately 0.7 million miles are land mass) and its population is 203 million according to 2000 Indonesian census data. Two-thirds of the population resides on the island of Java. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not yet released its 2000 census data on the breakdown of religious affiliations in the country, but according to the 1990 census, 87 percent of the population professed Islam, 6.0 percent were Protestant, 3.6 percent Catholic, 1.8 percent Hindu, 1.0 percent Buddhist, and 0.6 percent "other," which includes traditional indigenous religions, other Christian groups, and Judaism. There is evidence that suggests that since 1990—and particularly with the recent lifting of restrictions on such faiths as Confucianism—the number of persons professing a religion other than Islam or Christianity may have increased slightly. There is no information available on the number of atheists in the country; however, the numbers are believed to be minuscule.

Muslims are the majority population in most regions of Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, West Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, and North Maluku and they constitute over one-half of Maluku Province's population. Muslims are distinct minorities only in Irian Jaya/Papua, Bali, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi. The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni, although there also are adherents of Shi'a, Sufi, Ahmadiyah, and other branches of Islam.

The mainstream Muslim community is roughly divided into two groups: urban "modernists" who closely adhere to orthodox Sunni theology; and rural, predominantly Javanese "traditionalists" who incorporate elements of Javanese mysticism, Hinduism, and Buddhism into their practice of Islam. The "modernists," represented by the 35-million strong Muhammadiyah social organization, are the majority in Aceh, East and North Sumatra, East and South Kalimantan, and South and Central Sulawesi. The "traditionalists" are the majority in West, Central and East Java, and in West Nusa Tenggara/Lombok and are represented by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) social organization, which has 40 million members. Muhammadiyah, but not NU, also is represented in East Nusa Tenggara and Irian Jaya/Papua.

There also are small numbers of messianic Islamic groups, including the Malaysian-affiliated Jamaah Salamulla (or Darul Arqam), and the Indonesian Jamaah Salamulla (or Salamulla Congregation). Darul Arqam companies operate in Riau and West Java Provinces and in Jakarta. Led by a woman who claims to have been appointed by the Angel Gabriel to lead the group, the Indonesian Salamulla Congregation has approximately 100 members. Amadiyah followers claim that their leader Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was an Indian Muslim prophet and that anyone can become a prophet. Amadiyah has 242 branches spread throughout much of the country; there are 8 Amadiyah mosques in Jakarta. There also are approximately 50 Shi'a groups in the country, since the fall of President Soeharto in May 1998.

Most Christians reside in the eastern part of the country. Roman Catholicism is predominant in East Nusa Tenggara Province and in southeast Maluku Province, while Protestantism is predominant in central Maluku Province and in North Maluku and in North Sulawesi Provinces. In the easternmost province of Irian Jaya/Papua, Protestants predominate in the north, and Catholics in the south. (This is due primarily to the Dutch policy—continued by the Indonesian Government—of dividing the territory between foreign Catholic and Protestant missionaries who remain active in many areas of Irian Jaya/Papua.) Other significant Christian populations are located in North Sumatra, the seat of the influential Batak Protestant Church, which in early 1999 reunited after a government-manipulated division in 1993. There also are significant Christian populations in West (mostly Catholic) and Central Kalimantan (mostly Protestant) and on Java. Many urban Sino-Indonesians adhere to Christian faiths or combine Christianity with Buddhism or Confucianism.

Over the past 3 decades, internal migration, both government-sponsored and spontaneous, has altered the demography of the country. In particular it has increased the percentage of Muslims in the heretofore predominantly Christian eastern part of the country. By the early 1990's, Christians became a minority for the first time in some areas of the Moluccas. Some Christians believe that the Government intentionally sought to alter the demographic balance of the eastern part of the country by resettling Muslims in the area and providing various subsidies for those who settled spontaneously. While government-sponsored transmigration of citizens from heavily populated Java, Madura and Bali to more sparsely populated areas of the country contributed to the increase in the Muslim population in the areas of resettlement, there is no evidence to suggest that creating a Muslim majority in Christian areas was the objective of this policy, and most Muslim migration was spontaneous.

Most Hindus live in Bali, where they form over 90 percent of the population. Balinese Hinduism has developed various local characteristics that distinguish it from Hinduism as practiced on the Indian subcontinent. There also is a significant Hindu minority (called Keharingan) in Central Kalimantan and East Kalimantan, East Java, Lampung (Sumatra), Medan (North Sumatra), South and Central Sulawesi, and Lombok (West Nusatenggara). Many of these Hindus left Bali for these areas as part of the Government's transmigration program. The Hindu Association Pansada Hindu Dharma estimates that approximately 4,000 Chinese Hindus reside in Medan. Hindu groups such as Hare Krishna also are present in the country. In addition there are some indigenous faiths, including the "Keharingan" in Central Kalimantan (site of the first Hindu Kingdom in the country) and the Naurus on Seram Island (Maluku Province). The Naurus practice a combination of Hindu and animist beliefs, and many also have adapted some Protestant principles. Several hundred Hare Krishna followers live in Bali.

Eight schools of Buddhism are practiced in the country: Mahayana, Buddhayana, Theravada, Tridharma, Tantrayana, Kasogatan, Nichiren, and Maitreya (a branch of Mahayana). Mahayana has the largest number of followers, followed by Theravada, and Tantrayana. Most, but not all, Buddhists are of ethnic Chinese origin. Like the Sino-Indonesian population, most Buddhists are located in or near major urban and trading centers, rather than rural areas. The largest Maitreya Buddhist temple in the country is on Batam Island, Riau Province (Sumatra).

There are two national-level Buddhist organizations in the country, one a splinter group from the other: WALUBI (the Indonesian Buddhist Council) is the older organization and has affiliates from all the schools but Buddhayana, while members of the organization KASI (Indonesian Great Sangha Conference) primarily are Buddhayana. Buddhayana is an Indonesian school that was created by a monk in 1956. It combines Mahayana, Theravada, and Tantrayana teachings. WALUBI followers celebrated the annual May Waisak festival at Borobudur temple in Yogyakarta (Central Java), while KASI members celebrated the holiday in Jakarta.

There are approximately 2.5 million adherents of Confucianism (also known as "Chinese religion" and "Konghucu") in the country, and while most are Sino-Indonesians, other citizens also practice Confucianism. According to the Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia (MATAKIN) there are approximately 2 million followers in the country. The majority of Confucians are located on Java, Bangka Island, North Sumatra, North Sulawesi, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and North Maluku. Many Confucians also practice Buddhism and some Christianity. Before the ban on Confucianism was lifted in 2000 (see Section II), Confucian temples usually were located inside Buddhist temples.

Animism and other types of traditional belief systems, sometimes generically termed "Aliran Kepercayaan" (meaning beliefs) and "Kebatinan" (meaning spirituality), still are practiced in Central and East Java, Kalimantan, and in many of the eastern parts of the country, including isolated areas in Irian Jaya/Papua, the Moluccas, Flores, and Sumba. Many animists combine their beliefs with one of the recognized religions.

No verifiable data on the number of practicing Jehovah's Witnesses are available, although some leaders estimate that there are approximately 40,000 followers in the country spread throughout a number of provinces. Many adherents are Sino-Indonesians, but there also are followers from other ethnic groups, including Javanese, Dayak, and Batak.

There is a small population of citizens who practice Judaism. There is one synagogue, in Surabaya, East Java.

Falun Gong claims approximately 1,500 followers. Although most Indonesian followers are of Chinese descent, Falun Gong leaders claim that among their members are Muslims, Christians, and persons from other religious denominations.

There are no data available on the religious affiliations of foreign nationals and immigrants.

A limited number of foreign, primarily Christian, missionaries operate in predominantly Christian areas in regions such as Irian Jaya/Papua and Kalimantan.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion for members of officially recognized religions and belief in one supreme God, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, despite recent changes in Government regulations promoting freedom of religion, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity and on unrecognized religions. In addition the Government at times has tolerated society's abuse of religious freedom, claiming that it does not

have the capacity or authority to deal with the “emotions” of private individuals or groups who target others because of their beliefs. Article 29 of the country’s 1945 Constitution provides for religious freedom for members of officially recognized religions, in particular Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Presidential Decree No. 6, promulgated in January 2000, lifted legal restrictions on the practice of Confucianism that had existed since 1967; however, Confucianism does not enjoy the degree of freedom accorded to the other official religions. During the period covered by this report, the Government lifted its remaining ban on the Jehovah’s Witnesses (Attorney General Decision No. 255–06/2001), by revoking Attorney General Decision No. 129–12–1976, which had banned the group from openly practicing their faith.

While the law formally “embraces” only five officially recognized religions and to a more limited degree, Confucianism and Jehovah’s Witnesses, it explicitly states that other religions, including Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, and Taoism are not forbidden. The Government permits the practice of the mystical, traditional beliefs of “Aliran Kepercayaan” and “Kebatinan.” Some religious minorities—specifically the Baha’i and Rosicrucians—were given the freedom to organize by Presidential Decree 69/2000 (May 2000), which revoked Presidential Decree 264/1962 banning their activities. In 1998 the highest law-making body, the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), adopted a Human Rights Charter that provides citizens the freedom to practice their religion and does not specify particular religions. Article 22 of the country’s 1999 Human Rights Law mandates that individuals are free to practice one’s religion, and provides that the Government will protect these freedoms. The law allows conversion between faiths, and such conversions do occur, although converts to minority religions feel constrained not to publicize the event. However, there is a legal requirement to adhere to the official state ideology, Pancasila; because the first tenet of Pancasila is belief in one supreme God, atheism is forbidden.

Although Islam is the religion of the vast majority of the population, the country is not an Islamic state. In the past 50 years fundamentalist Islamic groups sporadically have sought to establish an Islamic state (see Section III), but the country’s mainstream Muslim community continued to reject the idea. Proponents of an Islamic state argued unsuccessfully in 1945 and throughout the parliamentary democracy period of the 1950’s for the inclusion of language (the so-called “Jakarta Charter”) in the Constitution’s preamble making it obligatory for Muslims to follow the dictates of Shari’a. During the Soeharto regime, advocacy of an Islamic state was forbidden. With the loosening of restrictions on freedom of speech and religion that followed the fall of Soeharto in May 1998, proponents of the “Jakarta Charter” have resumed their advocacy efforts. Inclusion of the language became an issue during the August 2000 People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) discussions of constitutional amendments. President Wahid voiced strong opposition to the proposal at the 2000 MPR session, arguing that its implementation would threaten national unity. Nevertheless, most government officials and parliamentarians are Muslim, and many have become increasingly responsive to their predominantly Muslim constituencies’ needs and interests. Furthermore much of the marriage and inheritance laws either are based on or compatible with Shari’a law. One Muslim interlocutor estimated that over 70 percent of these laws are derived from Shari’a principles.

Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism are the only religions that are registered officially with the Ministry of Religion, despite the lifting of bans on Confucianism and Jehovah’s Witnesses. While other religions are not banned, they only are able to register as social not religious organizations with the Ministry of Home Affairs. Followers of “Aliran Kepercayaan” must register with the Ministry of Education’s Department of National Education.

The registration and activities of official religions must be in compliance with a number of Ministry of Religion and other ministerial directives. Among these are the Regulation on Building Houses of Worship (Joint-Ministerial Decree No. 1/1969); the Guidelines for the Propagation of Religion (Ministerial Decision No. 70/1978); Overseas Aid to Religious Institutions in Indonesia (Ministerial Decision No. 20/1978); and Proselytizing Guidelines (No. 77/1978).

Religious groups and other social organizations must obtain permits to hold religious concerts and other types of public events. Permits usually are granted in an unbiased manner, unless there is concern that the activity could draw the anger of members of another faith who live in the area of the proposed venue.

According to the Government’s current 5-year Broad Outline of State Policy the central Government should: ensure all laws and regulations are in accordance with religious principles; increase religious harmony and interfaith dialog; encourage descriptive rather than dogmatic religious education; and increase the role and func-

tion of religious institutions to overcome the difficulties of social transition in the country and to strengthen interreligious and interethnic harmony.

New election laws permitted religiously oriented parties, predominantly those affiliated with Islam but also with Christianity, to participate in the June 1999 parliamentary elections, the first representative elections since 1955 judged to be free and fair. There are 15 political parties directly or partially affiliated with Islam: Islamic Development Party (KAMI); Islamic Members' Party (PU); People's Development Party (PKU); Masyumi Islamic Political Party (PPIM); New Masyumi Party (Masyumi Baru); United Development Party (PPP); 2 United Islamic parties (PSII); Crescent Star Party (PBB); Justice Party (PK); Nahdlatul Members Party (PNU); Unity Party (PP); Democratic Islamic Party (PID); National United Solidarity Party (PSUN); and the People's Development Party (PKB). The country has three Christian parties: KRISNA, or the National Indonesian Christian Party, Catholic Democratic Party (PKD), and the Democratic People's Devotion Party (PDKB). The members of the Buddhist group KASI have taken an interest in political participation and reportedly plan to form a party called the Buddhist Democratic Party of Indonesia (Partai Buddha Demokrat Indonesia). In the June 1999 elections the 3 Christian parties received relatively few votes, while the 15 Muslim parties together garnered approximately 30 percent of the vote. Of the Muslim parties, those with moderate views on the role of Islam in government and society dominated. Parties that strongly advocated an Islamization of government policy won a small percentage of the vote and few parliamentary seats.

All military major commands have religious facilities and programs for five official religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism). There are organized religious services and prayer meetings for each religion. Christians often have their own prayer groups that meet on Fridays, coinciding with the Muslim prayer day. In the past, there was a dedicated Religious Corps in the military, with all faiths represented, but it was eliminated during the Soeharto regime. Some officers are qualified as preachers and perform this function as a voluntary additional duty, but civilian religious leaders conduct most religious services on military posts.

Religious speeches are permitted if they are delivered to coreligionists and are not intended to convert persons of other faiths. However, televised religious programming is not restricted, and viewers can watch religious programs offered by any of the recognized faiths. In addition to many Muslim programs, ranging from religious instruction to talk shows on family issues, there also are a number of Christian programs, including televangelists, as well as programming by and for Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, and Hindus.

Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist holidays are celebrated as national holidays. Muslim holidays celebrated during the period covered by this report included: the Ascension of Muhammad (October 25); Idul Fitri (December 27 to 28); Idul Adah (March 5); the Muslim New Year (March 26); and Mohammed's Birthday (June 4). Nationally celebrated Christian holidays were Christmas Day, Good Friday (April 13), and the Ascension of Christ (May 24). Two other national holidays were the Hindu holiday, Nyepi (March 25) and the Buddhist holiday, Waisak (May 7). The Chinese New Year, celebrated by Confucians, is not a national holiday.

A number of government officials, as well as prominent religious and political leaders, were involved directly in, or supported, a number of interfaith groups, including the Society for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA), the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also ICRP), the Institute for Interfaith Dialog (Interfidei), and the Indonesian Peace Forum (FID), which was formed by political, religious, and grassroots leaders in response to the December 2000 Christmas Eve bombings and bombing attempts. President Wahid continued to emphasize harmony, tolerance, and mutual respect among different religious communities. Other highlevel officials made public statements and emphasized the importance of respect for religious diversity.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Some laws, policies, and actions continued to restrict and discriminate against the religious freedom of religious groups, at times including officially recognized groups, and the Government (i.e., the police) tolerated discrimination and abuse against religious groups by private actors.

On June 1, 2001, the Ministry of Justice revoked the 1976 decision by the Attorney General, reinforced by a separate decision by the same office in 1978, which banned Jehovah's Witnesses from practicing their faith. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Trinitarian Christians instigated the Government bans and that perhaps some mainstream Christian leaders have influenced government bias against the group. Jehovah's Witnesses report that they continued to experience difficulty registering marriages, enrolling children in school, and in other civil matters in some but not

all areas of the country. However, over the last few years, adherents have been able to obtain police permits to hold meetings in hotels and other public sites.

Historically the Government has tried to control Muslim groups whose practices deviate from mainstream Islamic beliefs because of pressure by nongovernmental leaders of mainstream Muslim groups and out of concern for national unity. In 1994 the Government banned the activities of the messianic Islamic group Darul Arqam; however, the Government has not enforced the ban, permitting the organization in practice to circumvent the ban by forming commercial companies, which distribute "halal" goods through food stalls and retail businesses. The Government has banned, in some provinces, the messianic Islamic group Darul Arqam and the Al-Ma'Unah school. The Government closely monitors Islamic groups considered to be deviating from orthodox tenets, and in the past has dissolved some groups. During the period covered by this report, the National Ulemas Council (MUI), which receives government recognition and funding for its activities, continued to oppose a small Islamic spiritual group, the Jamaah Salamulla (Salamulla Congregation) (see Section III). The Jamaah Salamulla believes in reincarnation, employs meditation, and resorts to self-flagellation and burning of the body to achieve spirituality. In May 2001, a mob vandalized the group's retreat in West Java (see Section III). The local village head had issued orders for group followers to vacate the area because their beliefs were "deviant," and they were disturbing the neighborhood.

The Ministry of Religion occasionally monitors the attendance of followers of minority faiths at their places of worship. In a few reported cases, Ministry officials asked the leaders of churches why their membership was low, suggesting that perhaps the church should close down if it had few members. However, many of the restrictions or bans on minority religions or on non-mainstream subsets of leading religions occurred at the provincial or district (kabupaten) level. In some cases, local religious organizations issued the bans on minority religions or groups (see Section III); however, the Government did nothing to challenge these bans. Some religious minority leaders expressed concern that the onset of decentralization and enhanced regional autonomy in the country, which will empower provincial and district governments, might result in issuance of regulations by local officials that could erode the right of minorities to practice their religions. For example, during the period covered by this report the Central Sulawesi branch of the National Ulemas Council (MUI), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) issued an edict banning Hare Krishna in the province. The chief public prosecutor's office in Bali issued a ruling in January 2001 that the local ban on Hare Krishna would remain in place because Hare Krishna practices "disturbed the peaceful lifestyle of Balinese Hindus" (see Section III). Some mainstream Balinese Hindus had lobbied the local public prosecutor's office to reinforce the ban on Hare Krishna.

Because the first tenet of the country's national doctrine, Pancasila, is the belief in one supreme God, atheism is forbidden; however, there were no reports of the persecution of atheists.

The Government prohibits proselytizing by recognized religions on the grounds that such activity, especially in areas heavily dominated by another recognized religion, potentially is disruptive. Ministry of Religion Decision No. 70/1978 (Proselytizing Guidelines) and the Guidelines for Proselytizing and Foreign Assistance to Indonesian Religious Organizations (No. 1/1979) forbid proselytizing by one recognized religion among the followers of another recognized religion. A 1979 Joint Ministry of Religion/Interior Decree (No. 1/1979) stipulates that the members of one religion are not allowed to try to convert members of other religions, including through bribes, persuasion, or distribution of religious materials (pamphlets, magazines, and other printed materials) to persons of other faiths. Door-to-door proselytizing to persons of other faiths also is proscribed. However, the law allows conversion between faiths, and such conversions do occur. Converts to religions other than Islam usually are silent about their change in faith, and there is no data on the numbers of conversions. Independent observers note that it has become increasingly difficult to obtain official recognition for interfaith marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims. Persons who are not members of one of the accepted religions also have difficulty in obtaining official recognition of their marriages.

Citizens must indicate their religion on the national identification cards; however, application of the regulation has been subject to local interpretation, and in some local areas, citizens must list one of the officially recognized religions regardless of whether or not they adhere to one of those religions. In other parts of the country where there are large Confucian populations, citizens can list their religion as Confucianism, and in parts of Java and Kalimantan, citizens can list "Aliran Kepercayaan" or "Kebatinan" as their faith. However, all citizens must specify a religion. It is obligatory to list a religion to receive a national identification card, and failure to identify a religion can make it impossible to obtain the identity card that

is required for employment. Marriage and birth registrations also require citizens to list their religion from among those officially recognized and native spiritual groups (including "Aliran Kepercayaan" and "Kebatinan"). In order to register the birth of a child, a parent must present a valid marriage certificate. As a result, adherents of nonrecognized religions have difficulty registering and obtaining marriage and birth certificates. Even though the Government lifted the ban on the practice of Confucianism in 2000, followers still have difficulties registering their marriages in many parts of the country. There are some interfaith groups that are lobbying to remove the requirement to list one's religion on national identification cards. However, many Muslim organizations oppose the change, arguing that it is important to know if a deceased person is Muslim in order to prepare the body for proper religious burial.

According to Guidelines on International Aid for Indonesian Religious Organizations (Ministry of Religion Decree No. 77/1978), foreign religious entities must obtain permission from the Ministry of Religion to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, and financial) to Indonesian religious groups. Although these guidelines are not enforced always, some Christian groups allege that when they are, they usually are applied to restrict the religious activities of minority groups, including Christians, and rarely are applied to Muslim groups, unless they are non-mainstream Islamic groups.

Since 1985 foreign missionaries must obtain work permit visas, and laws and decrees from the 1970's and 1980's limit the duration of the visas. These visas are difficult to obtain, as are visa extensions, although some extensions have been granted for remote areas like Irian Jaya/Papua. Ministerial Decision No. 49/1980 on Recommendations for Employment Applications of Foreign Religious Workers stipulates that all foreign religious workers must receive a recommendation from the Ministry of Religion (written by the Ministry's Legal and Human Resources Department and signed by the Ministry's Secretary General). To obtain ministry permission, the applicant must obtain and submit: a letter from his/her sponsor; a letter from the Indonesian Embassy in the applicant's country allowing the applicant to obtain a temporary stay visa (VBS); a curriculum vitae; evidence demonstrating that the applicant has skills that a citizen cannot offer; a letter of approval from the Ministry of Religion's provincial director; a letter of support from the Director General of the Ministry of Religion who handles matters concerning the applicant's religion; a letter from the receiving religious institution in the country confirming that the applicant will work no more than 2 years in the country before he/she will be replaced by a citizen, if one can be found; statistical information on the number of followers of the religion in the community; permission from regional security authorities; and approval from district and local Ministry of Religion authorities. Foreign missionaries who obtain visas are able to work relatively unimpeded, although there have been restrictions imposed in conflict areas such as Irian Jaya/Papua and the Moluccas. Foreign missionary work is subject to the funding stipulations of the Social Organizations Law.

There are no restrictions on religious publications, but the dissemination of these materials to persons of other faiths, especially by non-Muslims to Muslims, is not permitted under Ministry of Religion Decision No. 70/1978 and Joint Ministry of Religion/Ministry of Interior Decision No. 1/1979. Religious literature may be printed and religious symbols employed, but the public dissemination of these materials to persons of other faiths is not permitted according to Ministry of Religion Decision No. 70/1979. In previous years, the Government banned some books because of their religious content; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report.

The law does not discriminate against any religious group in employment, education, housing, and health; however, some minority groups allege that there is de facto discrimination that limits minority faith access to top government jobs and slots at public universities. Some minority groups also contend that promotion opportunities for non-Muslims in the military and the police are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. There also is pressure by Muslim groups to accord the best positions to Muslims, the majority group. Vocal segments of the Muslim community have called for a form of affirmative action for "Islamic" civil servants and businessmen to correct the discrimination against them during the Soeharto regime, when a very small minority of Sino-Indonesians were given preferential economic treatment, and many politically active Muslims (or Islamicists) were discriminated against in access to civil service employment and business opportunities.

Ethnoreligious representation in the general officer corps generally is proportional to the religious affiliation of the population at large; Javanese Muslims (the largest single ethnic group) dominate, but Christians are well represented in the general officer ranks (perhaps reflecting generally higher educational standards among the

Christian communities). However, promotion to the most senior ranks for Christians and other minorities is limited by a “glass ceiling.” Many Christian officers complain openly about this glass ceiling.

Government employees must swear their allegiance to the nation and to the country’s national ideology, Pancasila, the first tenet of which is the belief in one supreme God.

Elementary and secondary public schools require students to enroll in a religious studies class covering one of five official religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism). Students are free to choose which of these five religions to study, but enrollment is mandatory. Interdenominational courses are not offered, although some interfaith groups are lobbying for inclusion of this option in the educational curriculum. There still are no courses on Confucianism in the public schools.

The Ministry of Religion through a joint Ministerial Decree issued in 1969 restricts the building and expansion of houses of worship and prohibits the use of private dwellings for worship unless a license is obtained from the regional office of the Ministry of Religion and the community approves. This decree has been used to prohibit the construction and expansion of churches and to justify the closure of churches in predominantly Muslim areas. Although these regulations apply to all recognized religions, minority—especially Protestant—groups claim that the law is enforced only on minority groups, and that minority groups have difficulty obtaining the proper licenses and permits to build houses of worship. Christians claim that the law is not enforced on Muslim communities, which often do not apply for the permits before constructing a mosque. Even when the proper permits are obtained, some Christian groups encounter difficulties in constructing or reconstructing churches. For example, during the period covered by this report a Muslim mob attacked and destroyed a Pentecostal church that was under construction in North Jakarta, even though the church had all the required permits. The local authorities did nothing to redress the situation or resolve the problem, except to suggest that the church be relocated elsewhere. In November 2000, the director of the local government Social-Political Affairs (Kakansospol) office on Lombok Island ordered the closure of eight churches in Mataram on the grounds that the churches had not obtained the proper permits, and the activities of the churches disturbed the peace in what were predominantly Muslim neighborhoods. Another church in West Jakarta was closed and ordered to move under the written instruction of the Governor of West Jakarta during the period covered by this report. The governor claimed that the presence of the church had disturbed Muslim neighbors, and that a youth group from a nearby mosque opposed the idea of having the church so close to the mosque (see Section III). In some cases, even when the building or expansion permits were obtained, Muslim mobs attacked the church grounds, forcing the Christian worshippers to close their building project (see Section III).

President Wahid has supported the implementation of Shari’a (Islamic law) in Aceh Province. Law 44/1999 on Special Autonomy for Aceh gives Aceh authority to apply Shari’a law in the province to religion, education, culture, civil law, and policy-making spheres. At the end of the period covered by this report, more comprehensive legislation (Special Autonomy for Aceh Nanggroe Darussalam) was under consideration in the parliament, the People’s Representative Assembly (DPR). The bill would allow Aceh to establish a court system based on Shari’a law. Individuals sentenced under the new Acehnese Shari’a law would not have the right of appeal to the Supreme Court. The new law also would allow the Acehnese to restrict the freedom to choose one’s religion; for example, Muslims would be forbidden to convert. Extreme sanctions, such as the amputation of limbs, are not mentioned in the draft, and President Wahid has assured the public that these types of sanctions would not be practiced. However, some Muslim scholars argue that there is nothing in the draft legislation that would forbid the application of Shari’a punishments (hudud) to any crimes. The Government also has assured the public that Shari’a law would not apply to non-Muslims in Aceh, but debate in the DPR continues over whether Shari’a law would apply to all Acehnese residents, or only to Muslims.

In light of the Government’s decision to allow Aceh to apply aspects of Shari’a law and the implementation of national legislation granting greater regional autonomy (Law 22/1999 on Regional Autonomy and Presidential Decree 25/2000), a number of provincial parliaments were deliberating whether to impose Shari’a law in their provinces. In October 2000, Muslim leaders in South Sulawesi issued a statement that Muslims in the province were ready to accept Shari’a law, and they formed a committee (the KPPSI) to prepare for its implementation (see Section III). On April 24, 2001, the KPPSI issued the “Makassar Declaration” announcing the enactment of Shari’a law in South Sulawesi and forwarded the document to the DPR Chairman, Akbar Tandjung, for parliamentary consideration and approval. The declara-

tion was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Provincial legislatures in Banten (Java), Gorontalo (Sulawesi), Maluku, North Maluku, Riau (Sumatra), and South Kalimantan provinces also were considering implementation of Shari'a. A number of Christians and Muslim moderates have expressed serious concern that these efforts to implement Shari'a foreshadow a growing Islamic fundamentalism.

Marriage law for Muslims is based on Shari'a (Islamic law) and allows men to have up to four wives if the husband is able to provide equally for each of them. Court permission and the consent of the first wife is required, but reportedly most women cannot refuse subsequent marriages. Cabinet officials and military personnel customarily have been forbidden from taking second wives, although reportedly a few ministers in President Wahid's Cabinet have second wives. During 2000 Government Regulation 10/1983, which stipulates that a male civil servant must receive the permission of his superior to take a second wife, came under considerable attack and renewed scrutiny. The Minister of State for Women's Empowerment, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, proposed that the regulation be revoked or modified, arguing that supervisors often use the regulation as leverage over subordinates, and that the regulation is an embarrassment to women. She also asserted that many men avoid the regulation by establishing illicit relationships. Other women, including First Lady Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman Wahid, opposed revoking the regulation, arguing that it protects women. Some women's groups urged the Government to ban polygyny altogether.

In divorce cases, women often bear a heavier evidentiary burden than men in obtaining a divorce, especially in the Islamic-based family court system. Divorced women rarely receive alimony, and there is no enforcement of alimony payment. According to Shari'a, a divorced wife is entitled to only 3 months of alimony, and even alimony for this brief period is not always granted.

In some areas of the Moluccas where Islamic militia groups (Laskar Jihad) are in control, freedom of religion is restricted. Laskar Jihad militants have forced Christians in some areas of the Moluccas either to convert to Islam, leave the area, or be executed.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Religious violence and the lack of an effective government response to punish perpetrators and prevent further attacks continued to lead to allegations that officials were complicit in some of the violence or, at a minimum, allowed it to occur with impunity. Although the President and other officials repeatedly have criticized instances of interreligious violence, the Government's efforts to end or reduce such violence generally continued to be ineffective. The Government at times has tolerated the abuse of freedom of religion, claiming that it does not have the capacity or authority to deal with the "emotions" of private individuals or groups who target others because of their beliefs.

According to credible reports, individual members of the security forces in the Moluccas, especially on the centrally located island of Ambon, were responsible for some of the shooting deaths that occurred during widespread riots and communal clashes throughout the period covered by this report (see Section III).

Witnesses testified to human rights groups of incidents when active duty and retired military personnel participated in or stood by during the torture or executions of Christians who refused to convert to Islam in the Moluccas. These incidents reportedly occurred during the period covered by this report in Ambon, Keswui, Buru, Seram and other parts of Maluku Province, as well as in February 2000 in Lata Lata, North Maluku Province. Witnesses and victims also testified to human rights organizations that active duty military and police officials stood by while members of one religious group raped or mutilated members of another faith. Mass forced conversions and circumcisions of Christians in the Moluccas occurred during the period covered by this report, and witnesses and victims alleged that active duty military and police personnel were present, but did nothing, during some of these incidents.

During the period covered by this report, there were reports of beatings of Christians by Muslim police officers and of Muslims by Christian police officers in Maluku Province. There also were reports of Muslim military personnel beating Christians in the Moluccas. For example, on October 16, 2000, in the Christian area of Susupu, Halmahera (North Maluku) the leader of the army unit stationed there allegedly hit a Christian leader in the head with a pistol, fired warning shots into the air, and threatened to kill him and other Christians if they did not cooperate with the security forces.

In the Moluccas, both Christians and Muslims alleged that police and military personnel were not always neutral and often sided with coreligionists in the com-

munal conflict. In Maluku Province, Christian sources continued to allege that Muslim security forces often would fail to intervene to protect Christian areas that were attacked by Muslim militia. For example, predominantly Muslim units dispatched from Java and Sulawesi allegedly sided with Muslim vigilantes and used excessive force against Christians. In other instances, Muslims claimed that Christian security forces would not defend Muslim areas attacked by Christian militia. Muslims in Ambon claimed that members of the predominantly Christian police force sided with their coreligionists. However, there was no evidence to suggest that the security forces, as an institution, supported either group. Some individuals and some units occasionally sided with their coreligionists, but their actions appeared to be random and contrary to orders. On January 21 and 22, 2001, a joint military/police force created to deal with “rogue” police officers and militia members clashed with Muslims in Ambon, killing 10 Muslims, including three Muslims that had attacked a military patrol; two police officers also were killed. Muslim leaders criticized the joint force for acting in response to pressure by domestic and foreign Christians. Several hundred police officers themselves have been attacked, and some were killed because of their religion; hundreds of police members and their families and numerous other government officials are among the country’s internally displaced persons (IDP’s).

From July to November 2000, the Government largely was ineffective in deterring interreligious violence that led to over 1,000 deaths, thousands of injuries, and tens of thousands of displaced persons in the Moluccas. Enforcement of the law against criminal violence deteriorated, encouraging religious groups purporting to uphold public morality to act with growing impunity. In some incidents security forces took sides in the conflict and participated in the violence; in others the forces stood by while Christian and Muslim civilians battled one another. According to many Christian leaders, the anti-Christian sentiment behind the violence in the Moluccas and elsewhere is not new (see Section III), but the failure of the Government to punish the perpetrators associated with such acts is new. They claim that such impunity has contributed significantly to the continuation and spread of the violence. However, starting in December 2000, the security forces in Ambon started to act more objectively, often stemming attacks by one militant religious group against a civilian population of another faith. However, perpetrators—Laskar Jihad members in particular—rarely were detained and when they were, they typically were released after supporters rallied in demand of their release and threatened police. In addition the Government failed to suppress or respond to most cases of violence and did not resolve fully the many cases of attacks on religious facilities that occurred during riots. In many cases, the Government did not investigate such incidents at all.

Despite the imposition of a state of civil emergency in June 2000 and promises to deport all non-resident provocateurs, the Government failed to halt the violence in Maluku Province, largely because of weak local government leadership and inter-service rivalry between elements of the security forces. In May and June 2001, there was renewed violence, incited by the continued presence and activity of armed militant Muslims from outside the province (see Section III). However, the situations in North Maluku and Central Sulawesi Provinces stabilized during the period covered by this report due in large part to effective local government leadership that enforced the ban on entry by outsiders and administered justice to the perpetrators. In February 2001, some Christians who had fled were resettled in their homes on Halmahera Island.

In February 2001, North Maluku Province authorities detained, questioned and then expelled three foreign Christian missionaries and several Muslim teachers of Pakistani nationality. The province was under a state of civil emergency at the time (and throughout the period covered by this report). The Governor required both foreign and domestic groups from outside the province to obtain prior permission to enter the province and forbade entry if he believed the presence of an outside group might trigger more sectarian violence.

In April 2001, local courts sentenced to death three Christian prisoners who were found guilty of killing hundreds of Muslims and inciting religious hatred in Poso, Central Sulawesi in May to June 2000. Confessions and evidence supported the prosecution’s case that the three prisoners, who were Christian militia leaders, were guilty; however, the prisoners and some of their supporters alleged that the trials were religiously motivated because while they were sentenced to death, Muslim militia who had killed Christians and been arrested were released from detention under pressure from Muslim groups. In May 2001, a man was arrested in Luwu, Central Sulawesi for attempting to bomb three Christian churches.

There were no reports that the Government was directly involved in the forced resettlement of individuals because of their religious affiliations; however, the Government did urge many Christian and Muslim IDP’s in the Moluccas to relocate

temporarily to designated IDP camps or other facilities. The Government's urging of IDP's to relocate to safer areas is standard policy and appears to have been driven by concerns for IDP safety and welfare. Victims and witnesses reported that some active duty and retired military and police stood by while militia groups forced non-coreligionists out of their communities if they were unwilling to convert. Most of the incidents involved Muslim militia expelling Christians; however, there also were some reports of Christian militia expelling Muslims from certain areas (on Halmahera Island, North Maluku, and on Saparua Island, Maluku).

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

The police made some effort to crack down on radical Islamic groups conducting sweeps and raids from October to December 2000 (see Section III). But police were reluctant to appear anti-Islamic and the efforts were halfhearted and largely ineffective. There were no reports of any of the perpetrators being tried for assault and vandalism, and most raids on nightspots went unchecked. Bowing to the sensitivities of a growing number of increasingly vocal Muslims, many city governments including Jakarta's, ordered night clubs, bars, and other entertainment centers to close down during the Ramadhan holy season from November to December 2000 as well as during other Muslim religious holidays.

The Laskar Jihad ("holy war troops"), which formed in 2000 and underwent paramilitary training, continued its crusade against the Moluccan Christian populations, allegedly in reaction to a Christian conspiracy to turn Maluku Province into an independent Christian nation. Many of its recruits, some of whom were children, were deployed to Maluku and North Maluku Provinces beginning in late April 2000, where they reportedly joined in fighting against Christians. The Government generally failed to prevent their activities.

In July 2000, the acting governor of North Maluku started expelling militant Laskar Jihad troops from the province. However, the governor of Maluku took no similar action, claiming that it was the responsibility of Jakarta to order the expulsion of the militants. A major factor contributing to the continuation of violence in these two provinces was the failure of the Government and security forces to bring the perpetrators to justice or to prevent (and then deport) several thousand armed Laskar Jihad militants from Java who had joined forces with Muslims in various parts of the two provinces (see Section III).

On May 5, 2001, the Laskar Jihad leader in Maluku Province accused the Indonesian National Police (INP) of detaining him under false charges when he was arrested for having ordered the execution by stoning of a member of the Laskar Jihad found guilty of rape and adultery. In his defense, he asserted that he was within his rights to follow Shari'a law, not national criminal law, in this case. The police rejected his defense and, as of June 30, 2001, were investigating the case.

On Christmas Eve 2000, unknown terrorists bombed or attempted to bomb 34 Christian churches in 10 cities in 8 provinces and special districts. Nineteen citizens died from the blasts, including Muslims guarding the churches, and 84 persons were injured. The Government formed a special interagency team to investigate the bombings, and the NGO Indonesian Forum for Peace (FID) formed a joint fact-finding team with the Government to investigate the Christmas Eve church bombings. On June 28, 2001, the Bandung District Court sentenced Agus Kurniawan to 9 years in prison for his role in the bombings. Another suspect also was on trial for involvement in the bombings at the end of the period covered by this report. President Wahid and various religious leaders publicly stated their belief that the coordinated bombings were politically, not religiously, motivated to destabilize the country and undermine Wahid's government and reform efforts.

Forced Religious Conversion

According to multiple sources, including direct testimony from victims and witnesses in early 2001, thousands of Christians underwent forced conversions in the Moluccas from December 1999 to January 2001. There also were several hundred Muslims forced to convert to Christianity in North Maluku and Maluku Provinces in early to mid-2000. President Wahid conceded in late December that hundreds of Christians on Keswui and Teor Islands in Maluku converted to Islam in November and December 2000 to save their lives. By February 2001, over 700 converts had been able to leave the 2 islands. There also have been credible reports of forced conversions occurring in other parts of Ambon/Maluku and North Maluku (see Section II). Estimates range from over 3,500 to 8,000 cases. Many of these conversions, especially those in North Maluku, occurred in early 2000; however, confirmation of the conversions was not available until late 2000 and early 2001. For example, on Keswui and Teor Islands in Maluku Province, hundreds of Christians converted to Islam in November and December 2000 under threat of execution. While most documented cases involve Christians who converted to Islam, there have been reports

of Muslims who were forced to convert to Christianity in Halmahera, North/Maluku (Lata Lata, Bacan). There is credible evidence that 200 to 800 Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity in the Moluccas. Many of these conversions occurred during the period covered by this report.

There were allegations that local government officials, largely village heads, were complicit in some of the mass conversions. The governor of Maluku Province argued that most persons only were “pressed” and not coerced to convert.

Christian IDPs from Keswui and Teor who had undergone conversion said in media interviews that Muslim militants ordered Christians to convert to Islam or face probable death at the hands of Muslim militias. According to these sources, Christians were forced into mosques and converted to Islam en masse. Both male and female converts later were forced to undergo circumcision to prove that they were genuine Muslims, despite the fact that Muslim women in the Moluccas were not customarily circumcised. The victims suffered considerable pain and some developed infections as a result of the forced circumcisions.

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

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

On June 1, 2001, the Government lifted the 24-year-old ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses; this step toward greater respect for religious freedom and diversity continued an earlier trend when, in the previous reporting period, the Government lifted the ban on Confucianism and the Baha’i Faith (see Section II).

In late 2000, the Falun Gong obtained a license to operate as a social organization in the country, and Falun Gong members practiced freely without government interference.

During the period covered by this report, Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta, with the assistance of other local universities and institutes, opened a graduate level program on comparative religion. Courses on Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism are taught. State-run institutes of Islamic religion offer undergraduate comparative religion programs, but most of the lecturers are Muslims.

Government officials took steps to address the deterioration of religious tolerance in the country and the rise in sectarian violence along religious lines. During the period covered by this report, Government officials and domestic NGO’s assisted the U.S. Embassy in bringing Moluccan Christian and Muslim victims of forced conversion to Jakarta to testify (see Section IV). Indonesian government officials also participated in a U.S. Embassy-sponsored digital videoconference on Religious Freedom in a Democracy.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious intolerance, especially on the part of extreme Muslims towards religious minorities, including Christians, increasingly was evident and became a matter of growing concern to many religious minority members and Muslim moderates. There was continued interreligious violence in the Moluccas, and religious intolerance also manifested itself in numerous attacks on churches in various locations throughout the country.

Citizens generally tend to identify themselves and to interact with others on the basis of ethnicity, religion, race, or social class, and civil society is in a very nascent stage. The country is a multiethnic, multireligious society that, historically, has experienced outbursts of religious intolerance and violence.

The economic crisis that began in mid-1997 and continued through the period covered by this report, severely affected millions of citizens, pushing many below the poverty line and reversing the gains of the newly emerging middle class. With the weakening of central leadership and control—Soeharto stepped down in May 1998—ethnically and religiously based communal conflict reemerged in the late 1990’s. In 1997 ethnic/religious conflict broke out in West Kalimantan, and the tempo of violence increased after 1998, breaking out and continuing in pockets all over the archipelago (e.g., the Moluccas, Java, Kalimantan, Sumatra, Lombok, Irian Jaya/Papua, and Sulawesi); this violence continued during the period covered by this report. Most of the violence was attributable to unaddressed grievances and frustration with arbitrary central government development and migration policies that had, in many areas, upset delicate ethnic and religious balances. In the absence of a healthy civil society and democratic culture to arbitrate differences peacefully, this frustration was provoked easily and often took the form of extrajudicial violence under the banner of an ethnic/religious crusade. Despite the Government’s general

religious tolerance, it was unable to stop the sectarian violence or rein in religious extremism, particularly for the Muslim majority.

In the Moluccas, over 1,500 persons were killed, half a million internally displaced, and thousands forced to convert to another faith, largely because of their religious affiliation. While the underlying causes of the conflict were attributable largely to unresolved grievances and resentment over the distribution of economic and political power between local residents and more recently arrived migrants, the competition quickly took on religious overtones and resulted in the segregation and displacement along religious lines of the population in both provinces. A major factor contributing to the continuation of violence in these two provinces was the failure of the Government and security forces to bring the perpetrators to justice, and to prevent the influx of or deport several thousand armed Muslim militants (Laskar Jihad) from Java who joined forces with Muslims in various parts of the two provinces (see Section II). The presence of these outside forces hindered local reconciliation efforts and peaceful resolution of the conflict. While in the previous reporting period, the victims were divided approximately equally between Christians and Muslims, most of the 1,500 victims during the period covered by this report were Christians.

The Government failed to halt the violence in Maluku Province. Religious violence and the lack of an effective government response to punish perpetrators and prevent further attacks led to allegations that officials were complicit in some of the incidents or, at a minimum, allowed them to occur with impunity (see Section II). In May and June 2001, there was renewed violence, particularly in the area of Poso in Central Sulawesi, which resulted in numerous deaths and widespread destruction. The violence was engendered by the continued presence and activity of armed militant Muslims from outside the province. However, the situations in North Maluku and Central Sulawesi Provinces stabilized by the end of the period covered by this report largely due to effective local government leadership (see Section II).

There were numerous attacks on churches and some attacks on mosques in various locations throughout the country, ranging from minor damage to total destruction; only a few cases, if any, were investigated thoroughly, and there were no reports of perpetrators being punished (see Section II). According to the Indonesian Christian Communication Forum, from January 1999 to April 2001, 327 churches were closed or destroyed, while the Ministry of Religion reports that 254 mosques were attacked or destroyed during the same period. Most of the attacks and destruction occurred in the Moluccas. From July 1, 2000 to May 31, 2001, there were 108 reported incidents of destruction of churches (compared to 163 incidents reported in the previous period) including 21 attacks on churches in Java; 20 in Sumatra, 10 in Lombok; 9 in South, Central, and Southeast Sulawesi; and 5 in North Sumatra (Medan).

In late May 2001, three churches in Pasuruan, East Java were attacked by mobs who allegedly were supporters of President Wahid and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Muslim organization. NU leaders and President Wahid denied that NU members were responsible and ordered the police to investigate. Authorities charged 2 persons with attacking churches and 132 persons with rioting.

Attacks on mosques in the conflict-torn Moluccas continued. The Maluku provincial government reported that four mosques had been attacked or destroyed during the period covered by this report, while the North Maluku provincial government reported no attacks on mosques during the same time period. On May 30, 2001, a mob of allegedly pro-President Wahid supporters associated with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) torched a mosque associated with rival Muhammadiyah followers in Pasuruan, East Java. On May 22, 2001, a mob of 400 persons vandalized the retreat of Jamaah Salamulla (an Islamic group) in Bogor, West Java (see Section II).

Attacks on places of worship reflect religious intolerance, but other contributing factors include general underlying socioeconomic and political competition and tensions. Non-Muslims in general—and Sino-Indonesians in particular—tend to be economically better off than the majority of Muslims. Similarly in the Moluccas, Central Sulawesi, Irian Jaya/Papua and Kalimantan, economic tensions between local or native peoples (predominantly non-Muslim) and more recently arrived migrants (predominantly Muslim) were a significant factor in incidents of interreligious and interethnic violence.

Islam is undergoing a renaissance in the country, as evidenced by a growing number of religious schools (*pesantrens*), mosques, banks and other businesses, civic groups, media outlets, and political parties associated with Islam (see Section II). According to a 1999 study released by the U.S. Department of State in Fall 2000, approximately 75 percent of the country's Muslims wanted Islam to play a very large role in society and government policy, and 54 percent wanted religious leaders to become more politically active. There are 15 Islamic political parties; Muslims

continued to seek greater political empowerment and economic opportunity through these political parties as well as through religious organizations. The number of stores selling Islamic attire and religious objects increased greatly during the period covered by this report; more women donned the head covering, the "jilbab." Since the early 1990's, a growing number of Muslims have undertaken the Hajj. In 2001 approximately 205,000 persons (or 24,000 more than in 2000) made the pilgrimage, despite the continuing economic crisis in the country. The Islamic publication, *Sabali*, which advocates obligatory adherence of Muslims to Shari'a law, was one of the country's top five magazines in circulation during the period covered by this report.

In general Islam in the country traditionally has been moderate. According to leading Muslim scholars and leaders, the Muslim community still is predominantly (80 percent) moderate; however, with the removal of Soeharto-era restrictions on religious organization and expression, there has been a resurgence—or a greater vocalization—of advocacy for an Islamic state. An estimated 20 percent of the country's Muslims consider themselves to be fundamentalists and advocate establishment of an Islamic state, which would make it obligatory for Muslims to follow Shari'a law. The majority of these Muslims (16 to 18 percent) pursue their goal through peaceful political and educational means. A small, but vocal minority (2 to 4 percent) condones coercive measures and has resorted to violence. Fundamentalist groups advocating coercion and resorting to violence include: Laskar Jihad, Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Hizbullah Front, Laskar Mujahidan, and the Campus Association of Muslim Students (HAMMAS). Many of the country's religious minorities expressed growing concern over what they perceived to be increasing demands by certain Muslim groups to impose Shari'a law in the country; however, during the period covered by this report, a proposal to implement Islamic law failed (see Section II).

Anti-Christian sermons and publications continued during the period covered by this report. In the early part of 2000, a movement known as the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) emerged on university campuses in Java. There were sporadic reports from some Jakarta neighborhoods that student followers of the NII movement set up roadblocks, checked identification cards, and harassed passing non-Muslims, in some cases forcing them to recite passages from the Koran. Similar incidents occurred in Makassar, South Sulawesi. In October 2000, Muslim students attacked several hotels allegedly operating prostitution and gambling businesses in Riau Province.

In December 2000, over 500 armed Laskar Jihad militants attacked cafes in Solo and demanded that they close during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadhan. Also in December 2000, the Laskar Hizbullah raided a number of nightspots in an elite Jakarta neighborhood. In early May 2001, radical Muslim groups raided a number of bookshops in urban areas of Java and Sulawesi and destroyed books that they claimed had Communist content, even books whose authors criticized Communism. Protests from Islamic groups prompted a publisher to remove books by the religious philosopher Anand Krishna from bookstores. Extremist Muslim groups also targeted cultural events, including art exhibits, and homosexual gatherings.

Some radical Islamic groups established vice squads to monitor the behavior of other Muslims and to punish errant behavior. One such group, the Anti-Vice Mass Movement (GMAM) kidnaped and tortured two police officials in Makassar, South Sulawesi for the police officials' alleged involvement in gambling and prostitution activities. Non-Muslims also were the targets of violence. Roadblocks manned by Muslim morality squads who check the religious identities of passersby continued to operate in the Makassar area. There were reports of some non-Muslims being detained and beaten by these squads.

Political tensions among Muslim groups became more intense during the period covered by this report, in particular between the 2 largest Muslim social organizations, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which has 40 million members, and Muhammadiyah, which has 35 million members. NU is associated politically with President Wahid, its former chairman, while Muhammadiyah is associated politically with Amien Rais, a former chairman of the organization and now chairman of the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). During the first 6 months of 2001, NU supporters, enraged by Rais' calls for the impeachment of Wahid, attacked and damaged Muhammadiyah offices and other properties, including a mosque frequented by Muhammadiyah followers, in Central and East Java.

Muslim student groups also are divided along political lines. The Muslim Students' Action Front (KAMMI), the Association of Islamic Students (HMI), and the Intercampus Muslim Student Association (HAMMAS) opposed President Wahid and

called for his removal or resignation. On the other hand, the Muslim Student's Movement (PMII), which is affiliated with NU, supported Wahid.

Some prominent Muslim interfaith organizations also were in part divided along political affiliations. Many of the Muslim members of the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (ICRP) were affiliated with Muhammadiyah and some opposed the continuation of President Wahid's presidency, while many of the Muslim members of the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (also ICRP) were NU supporters and pro-President Wahid.

Many Muslim moderates worried that minority extremist groups potentially could force their will on the country's moderate Muslim majority and erode the country's religious harmony. In December 2000, more than 70 Muslim clerics and 17 NGO leaders issued a letter to the police calling the raids and sweepings of pubs, hotels, and amusement centers "intolerable acts" and giving their support to police efforts to stem the raids. A coalition of media, human rights groups, students, legal scholars and literary figures (the Alliance for Freedom of Thought and Expression) condemned the book seizures in May 2001. But only one Islamic organization, the Muhammadiyah Youth Association (IRM), joined the public condemnation. In May 2001, the Attorney General announced a government prohibition on sweeping operations, and the Minister of Religion noted that such operations conflicted with religious teachings.

Muslims are a religious minority in the easternmost province of Irian Jaya/Papua. The arrival in the province of mainly Muslim migrants from other parts of the country has in the past led to attacks on mosques; however, there were no reports of attacks on mosques in Irian Jaya/Papua during the period covered by this report.

Muslim and Christian observers expressed concern over what they believed was an increase in Christian fundamentalist groups in the country, some of which were influenced and partially funded by foreign groups from other countries. Some observers maintain that leaders of these "Charismatic" Christian groups were aggressive proselytizers, who did not respect the sensitivities of the country's Muslim majority. When radical Muslim groups alleged that there was a foreign Christian conspiracy to destabilize the country by attacking Muslims, moderate Muslim and Christian religious leaders and intellectuals claimed that they were referring to these groups.

Some extremist religious leaders—both Muslim and Christian—preached hatred against other religious groups and encouraged their followers to engage in violence against persons of other faiths. Speaking at mosques and on the radio, the Laskar Jihad leader stationed in Ambon/Maluku ordered Muslims to launch a Jihad against non-believers—Christians—and to kill them if need be. Other local Moluccan Muslim leaders threatened to kill Muslims who tried to make peace or do business with Christians. Some extreme Christian leaders reportedly encouraged their followers to use violence against Muslims. Both sides argued that they were acting out of self-defense, and that the opposing side had started the cycle of violence.

Members of the mainstream Hindu community, represented by the Pansada Hindu Dharma, reported no incidents where followers were discriminated against or harassed; however, some Hindus objected strongly to the use of sacred Hindu words and symbols in the secular world of advertising. In January 2001, the Peradah Hindu Youth Association lodged a formal complaint against a motorcycle company that had used the names Rama, Vishnu, and Krishna for their line of motorcycles.

Some mainstream Balinese Hindus opposed the presence of Hare Krishna in Bali and pressed the local public prosecutor's office to reinforce a local ban on Hare Krishna (see Section II). Hare Krishna followers strongly oppose the Balinese Hindu tradition of sacrificing meat during their ceremonies, one of a number of ritual differences between the two Hindu groups.

Members of the Baha'i Faith did not report major problems since the lifting of the ban on their religious practice (see Section II); however, in early May 2001, a crowd of Muslims reportedly ousted two Baha'i families living in a predominantly Muslim village in the Donggala District of Central Sulawesi. The local branch of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a religious decree (fatwa) banning the spread of the Baha'i Faith in the district.

During the period covered by this report, there were a number of reports of killings of persons who practice traditional magic—"dukun santet"—based in part on indigenous pre-Islamic "Aliran Kepercayaan" and "Kebatinan" belief systems. Police acknowledged in November 2000 that at least 20 villagers in the Cianjur area of West Java had been executed for allegedly practicing traditional magic. Police arrested 20 persons suspected of involvement in the killings. However, none of the cases had come to trial by the end of the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, interfaith organizations grew, and their activities enjoyed some media coverage. The Indonesian Peace Forum (FID) formed immediately following the December 24, 2000 church bombings, and brought together moderate leaders from all of the country's major religions. FID leaders, many of them prominent Muslims, deplored the attacks on the churches, called for a thorough government investigation, and formed their own investigative team. FID also sponsored a number of events to foster religious respect and end interreligious, ethnic, and separatist conflicts.

Other active interfaith groups include the Society for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA); the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP); the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also ICRP); the Institute for Interfaith Dialogue (Interfidei); and the Institute of Gender and Religious Studies. During the period covered by this report, these and other similar organizations hosted numerous national and regional seminars to promote interfaith dialog and religious tolerance. In November 2000, the two ICRP organizations announced plans to host an Asia-wide Conference on Religion and Peace. In December 2000, Interfidei held an interdenominational forum on Religion and National Integration in Yogyakarta, and in February 2001, the national chapter of the World Committee of Churches held an Interfaith Youth Conference in North Sulawesi. One of the Muslim panelists attributed the religious intolerance to the incorrect teaching of religion in the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya and visiting State Department officials regularly engaged Indonesian government officials (particularly in the Ministry of Religion and the State Secretariat) on religious freedom issues and also encouraged officials from other embassies to discuss the subject with the Indonesian Government. U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya officials focused many of these discussions on the deterioration of religious freedom in the Moluccas. U.S. government officials expressed serious concern over the forced conversions of Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas and encouraged Indonesian government officials and Indonesian NGO leaders to hear the testimony of victims of forced conversion and to lobby to bring action against the perpetrators of such acts (see Section III). Some of these interventions appeared in local press accounts. The Embassy also voiced support for the Government's decision to lift its ban on Jehovah's Witnesses.

The U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), local NGO's, and others pressed Ambon/Maluku government officials to evacuate forced conversion victims from Teor and Keswui Islands in January 2001 (see Section II). Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya and USAID officials were partly successful in their encouragement of moderate Moluccan Muslims and Christians to seek ways—through the Baku Bae movement and other initiatives—to end the violence and to work jointly to rebuild the war-torn provinces.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya officials regularly met with religious leaders to discuss the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and to encourage interreligious efforts to mitigate the sectarian conflict in the Moluccas and to combat religious intolerance in many parts of the country.

U.S. Embassy and USAID officials worked with Indonesian and international NGO's to develop methods to mitigate religious conflict and to combat religious intolerance. The U.S. Embassy and USAID worked with Indonesian interfaith NGO's, such as the Society for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA), the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also ICRP), and the Institute for Interfaith Dialog (Interfidei). They also met with Indonesian and international human rights groups and with the National Human Rights Commission (KOMNASHAM) and its branch in Ambon in the Maluku Province.

The U.S. Embassy promoted religious tolerance through public affairs, exchange, and training programs and engagement with Indonesian officials and religious and NGO leaders. State Department and USAID funding was used to promote religious freedom, tolerance, and conflict resolution. U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya officials identified and assisted several Indonesians to testify on religious freedom before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and advised the USCIRF of potential issues. The U.S. Embassy served as a liaison between the U.S. Government, Congress and Indonesian government officials on religious freedom issues and advocated U.S. government positions on areas of concern. In May 2001, over 170 Indonesians (government officials and NGO representatives) attended a U.S. Embassy-sponsored digital videoconference on Religious Freedom and Tolerance in a Democracy in May 2001. Religious freedom and tolerance also was one of the three themes addressed during the annual Fulbright seminar held

in May 2001 in Bali. The Embassy/U.S.-Indonesian Fulbright Foundation (AMINEF) provided expertise and equipment (a virtual library on comparative religion) to help establish the country's first graduate-level program on comparative religion at Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta (see Section II).

In late June 2001, the U.S. Embassy arranged for a U.S. speaker on religious freedom to visit Indonesia. The speaker participated in an interreligious conference in Jakarta and began teaching a 5-week course at Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta, which was ongoing at the end of the period, covered by this report. The U.S. Embassy also supported a conference on religious freedom in South Sulawesi from June 1 to 4, 2001. Indonesians participated in International Visitor and USAID programs related to religious and ethnic tolerance and conflict resolution. Two U.S. Fulbright scholars lectured and conducted research in comparative religion at Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta, Central Java and at the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Jakarta. The U.S. Embassy sponsored two workshops for domestic media on how to report on conflict and how to encourage conflict resolution. The U.S. Embassy and USAID also worked with The Asia Foundation and IAIN to develop a new course that will look at Indonesia's national doctrine, Pancasila; and will stress tolerance and respect for human rights. The U.S. Embassy funded the printing of 16,000 copies of the new textbook for the course.

USAID funded international and domestic NGO's promoting religious tolerance, conflict resolution, and truth and reconciliation. USAID and U.S. Embassy support for the Muslim-Christian Joint Committee on the Moluccas (Baku Bae) was instrumental in advancing grassroots efforts to mitigate the conflict and to find constructive solutions benefiting both religious communities. In March 2001, USAID also supported a 3-day conference on the Moluccas conflict in southeast Maluku province. Muslim and Christian grassroots, religious, and community leaders attended the meetings and agreed to take joint steps to end the sectarian violence in the region.

USAID and the U.S. Embassy supported local NGO and Indonesian government efforts to bring victims of forced conversions to Jakarta to testify before human rights organizations and Indonesian government officials. USAID-funded public service announcements promoting interfaith tolerance aired on major commercial and government television stations from January to March 2001. USAID also funded a number of interfaith conflict resolution workshops for journalists and religious and grassroots leaders to address the sectarian conflicts in the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi.

JAPAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions. The Aum Shinrikyo group, which lost its religious status following its 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, remained under government surveillance.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 145,902 square miles. The population is an estimated 127 million. Regular participation in formal religious activities by the public is low, and the accurate determination of the proportions of adherents to specific religions is difficult. According to the latest statistics published by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, 44.8 percent of citizens adhered to Buddhism, 49.5 percent to Shintoism, 4.8 percent to so-called "new" religions, and 0.8 percent to Christianity in December 1999. However, Shintoism and Buddhism are not mutually exclusive religions, and the figures do not represent the ratio of actual practitioners; most members claim to observe both. All other faiths are classified as "new religions" and include both local chapters of international religions such as the Unification Church of Japan and the Church of Scientology as well as the Tenrikyo, Seichounoie, Sekai Kyusei Kyo, Perfect Liberty, and Risho Koseikai religions, which were founded in the country. A small segment of the population, mostly foreign-born residents, attend Orthodox, Jewish, and Islamic services.

There are 28 Buddhist sects recognized by the Government under the 1951 Religious Corporation Law. The major Buddhist sects are Tendai, Shingon, Joudo, Zen, Nichiren, and Nara. In addition to traditional Buddhist orders, there are a number of Buddhist lay organizations, including the Soka Gakkai, which has more than 8 million members. The three main schools of Shintoism are Jinja, Kyoha, and Shinkyoha. Among Christians, both Catholic and Protestant denominations enjoy modest followings.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government does not require that religious groups be registered or licensed; however, to receive official recognition as a religious organization, which brings tax benefits and other advantages, a group must register with local or national authorities as a "religious corporation." In response to Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attacks in 1995, a 1996 amendment to the Religious Corporation Law gives governmental authorities increased oversight of religious groups and requires greater disclosure of financial assets by religious corporations. The Diet enacted two additional laws in December 1999 aimed at regulating the activities of Aum Shinrikyo. In practice almost all religious groups register. The most recent available statistics from the Cultural Affairs Agency listed 182,935 registered religious groups as of December 31, 1999. However, the Cultural Affairs Agency estimates that nearly 5,000 of these groups are dormant and has taken legal action in an attempt to remove dormant groups from its registry. In 1998 the Matsuyama District Court ordered the dissolution of a registered Shinto religious group that had been dormant since 1982. Since 1998 courts have accepted requests by the Cultural Affairs Agency to dissolve three dormant religious bodies that had been registered under the Religious Corporation Law.

Some Buddhist and Shinto temples and shrines receive public support as national historic or cultural sites. This situation is subject to change in the aftermath of a 1997 Supreme Court ruling that a prefectural government may not contribute public funds to only one religious organization if the donations supported, encouraged, and promoted a specific religious group. In 1998 the Kochi District Court ruled that using municipal government funds to repair two Shinto shrines was tantamount to allocating public funds to one religious group and therefore was unconstitutional. However, no additional cases questioning the use of public funds in connection with a religious organization have been brought since 1998.

There are no known restrictions on proselytizing.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Aum Shinrikyo organization, which officially was renamed Aleph by its leadership in February 2000, is under active government surveillance. Aum Shinrikyo lost its legal status as a religious organization in 1996 following the indictment of several hundred cult members for the group's 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system. From June to November 2000, the Tokyo District Court sentenced five senior cult members to death and two others to life imprisonment in connection with the 1995 Sarin gas attack, as well as the 1989 killings of an Aum Shinrikyo member who attempted to leave the organization and a lawyer who had assisted several individuals who were trying to persuade their family members to leave the organization. Cases still are pending in district courts against seven other senior Aum members, including its leader Shoko Asahara. In March 2000, the Tokyo District Court ordered Aum/Aleph to pay \$640,000 (688 million yen) to survivors and next-of-kin to those killed in the attack. In July 2000, lawyers representing senior Aum Shinrikyo officials reached agreement to pay \$37.4 million (40 billion yen) in compensation.

In December 1999, the Diet enacted two laws to enable authorities to monitor and inspect facilities of groups found to have committed "indiscriminate mass murder during the past 10 years" and to uncover assets of companies associated with these groups. The new laws are subject to review, including possible repeal, in 2005. The Public Security Examination Commission placed Aum/Aleph under continuous surveillance for a 3-year period on January 31, 2000, on the basis of one of the two laws. The Public Security Investigative Agency conducted at least 19 on-site inspections of Aum/Aleph facilities around the country in connection with the surveillance order during the period covered by this report. According to an April 2001 Justice Ministry report, Aum/Aleph has an estimated 1,650 followers, a decrease from 10,000 in 1995. However, under the 1999 laws, Aum is required to file a report

every 3 months listing member names and addressees and claimed to have only 1,019 members in February 2001.

In September 2000, municipal officials from Saitama prefecture publicly revealed that they had taken action earlier in the year to reverse their decision to block two daughters of Aum founder Shoko Asahara from attending a local elementary school. However, in November 2000, the Supreme Court upheld a decision taken by Ibaraki prefecture to block the school registration of three other children of Asahara.

Members of the Unification Church continued to allege that police do not act in response to allegations of forced deprogramming of church members. They also claimed that police do not enforce the laws against kidnaping when the victim is held by family members and that Unification Church members are subjected to prolonged detention by individuals, who are not charged by police.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally are amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, there is some societal discrimination against followers of Aum Shinrikyo.

In April 2001, the Tokyo District Court sentenced a defendant to 6 years' penal servitude for firing shots into a Tokyo apartment building where followers of Aum Shinrikyo live. He reportedly remained in official custody at the end of the period covered by this report. At least four municipalities in which Aum facilities are active refused to register Aum group members as residents. Other communities continued to block the establishment of new Aum settlements or demand that Aum members leave their municipalities through protests and public appeals.

Members of the Unification Church alleged in June 1999 that police do not act in response to allegations of forced deprogramming of church members.

In May 2001, approximately 250 Muslims from various regions of the country traveled to Toyama prefecture to protest an incident in which a defaced copy of the Koran allegedly was thrown at a place of business owned by a Muslim foreign resident. Local police officials were investigating the incident at the end of the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promotion of human rights, including the promotion of religious freedom internationally. The U.S. Embassy maintains periodic contact with representatives of religious organizations.

KIRIBATI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Kiribati, an island state of approximately 265 square miles, has a population of approximately 90,000. Christianity was introduced widely into the area by missionaries in the nineteenth century. Major religions include: The Roman Catholic Church; the Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC), formerly the Congregational Church; Seventh-Day Adventists; the Baha'i Faith; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Roman Catholics are the dominant Christian denomination and constitute an estimated 54 percent of the population; members of the KPC constitute an estimated 38 percent. Other religious groups each account for 1 to 2 percent of

the population. Persons with no religious preference account for about 5 percent of the population.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

There is no state or politically dominant religion. The State does not favor a particular religion, nor are there separate categories for different religions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Christianity, the religion of more than 90 percent of the population, is a dominant social and cultural force, but there are amicable relations between the country's various religions. Nonbelievers, who constitute a very small percentage of the residents, do not suffer discrimination. Virtually all governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister, cleric, or church official.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA¹

The Constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief;" however, in practice the Government discourages organized religious activity, except that which is supervised by officially recognized groups. Genuine religious freedom does not exist.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The regime appears to have cracked down on unauthorized religious groups in recent years, and there have been unconfirmed reports of the killing of members of underground Christian churches. In addition religious persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China appear to have been arrested and subjected to harsh penalties, according to several unconfirmed reports. In the late 1980's, there was some easing of religious discrimination policies when the Government initiated a campaign highlighting President Kim Jong Il's "benevolent policies." Government sponsored religious groups that were established at that time continue to operate, and foreign religious leaders visited the country during the period covered by this report. The inter-Korean summit in mid-2000 led to an increase in contacts with the Republic of Korea; its impact on the religious freedom situation remains unclear.

There was no information available on societal attitudes toward religious freedom.

The U.S. Government does not have diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and information about the situation for religious freedom in the country is limited. The Government maintains tight and effective control on information on conditions in the country.

North Korea does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other invited visitors the freedom of movement that would enable them to assess human rights conditions fully there. This report is based on information obtained over more than a decade, updated where possible by information drawn from recent interviews, reports, and other documentation. While limited in detail, this informa-

¹The United States does not have an embassy in North Korea. This report draws heavily on non-U.S. Government sources.

tion is nonetheless indicative of the religious freedom situation in North Korea today.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 47,000 square miles, and the population is approximately 21 million. The number of religious believers is unknown but has been estimated at 10,000 Protestants, 10,000 Buddhists, and 4,000 Catholics. In addition the Chondogyo Young Friends Party, a government-sponsored group based on a traditional religious movement, is still in existence. There has been a limited revival of Buddhism with the translation and publication of Buddhist scriptures that had been carved on 80,000 wooden blocks and kept at an historic temple. In the late 1980's, the Government sent two Roman Catholic men to study religion in Rome. However, the two returned before being ordained priests, and it still is not known whether any Catholic priests, whose role is a fundamental element for the practice of the Catholic faith, remain in the country. Seoul Archbishop Nicholas Jin-Suk Cheong, appointed by the Pope as Apostolic Administrator of Pyongyang, was quoted in July 2000 as stating that while there were 50 priests in the country in the 1940's, it was not known if they still were alive in July 2000.

Two Protestant churches under lay leadership and a Roman Catholic church (without a priest) have been opened since 1988 in Pyongyang. One of the Protestant churches is dedicated to the memory of North Korean former leader Kim Il Sung's mother, Kang Pan Sok, who was a Presbyterian deacon. Several foreigners resident in Pyongyang attend Korean services at these churches on a regular basis. Although some foreigners who have visited the country over the years stated that church activity appears staged, others believe that church services are genuine, although sermons contain both religious and political content supportive of the regime. The Government claims, and visitors confirm, that there are more than 500 authorized "house churches." Hundreds of religious figures have visited the country in recent years, including papal representatives, the Reverend Billy Graham, and religious delegations from the Republic of Korea, the United States, and other countries. A Vatican delegation, including Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Vatican undersecretary for relations with states, visited the country in November 2000. The delegation reported a meeting with the Catholic community in Pyongyang, and a meeting with the leader of the Association of North Korean Catholics. Overseas religious relief organizations also have been active in responding to the country's food crisis. An overseas Buddhist group has been operating a factory in the Najin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone since 1998 to produce food for preschool children.

There are 300 Buddhist temples. Most of the temples are regarded as cultural relics, but in some of them religious activity is permitted.

There have been unconfirmed reports of members of underground Christian churches.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief;" however, in practice the Government discourages organized religious activity, except that which is supervised by officially recognized groups. Genuine religious freedom does not exist. The Constitution also stipulates that religion "should not be used for purposes of dragging in foreign powers or endangering public security."

During and immediately after the Korean War of 1950-53, large numbers of religiously active persons were identified by the Government as "counterrevolutionaries," and many of them were killed or imprisoned in concentration camps. The peak of this oppression was in the early 1970's when a constitutional revision added a clause regarding "freedom of antireligious activity." The Government began to moderate its religious discrimination policies in the late 1980's, when it launched a campaign highlighting Kim Jong Il's "benevolent politics." As part of this campaign, the regime eased the system that it had instituted after a period of factional strife in the 1950's of classifying the population into dozens of rigidly defined categories according to family background and loyalty to the regime, and allowed the formation of several government-sponsored religious organizations. These organizations serve as interlocutors with foreign church groups and international aid organizations. Foreigners who have met with representatives of these organizations believe that some members are genuinely religious but note that others appear to know little about religious dogma or teaching. Although the organizations continue to operate and visits by foreign religious figures have increased, the Government appears to have suppressed unauthorized religious groups in recent

years. In particular, religious persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China appear to have been arrested and subjected to harsh penalties, according to several unconfirmed reports. The inter-Korean summit in mid-June 2000 led to an increase in contacts with persons in the Republic of Korea; its impact on religious freedom in North Korea remains unclear.

A constitutional change in 1992 deleted the clause about freedom of antireligious propaganda, authorized religious gatherings, and provided for "the right to build buildings for religious use."

Several schools for religious education exist. There are 3-year religious colleges for training Protestant and Buddhist clergy. A religious studies program also was established at Kim Il Sung University in 1989; its graduates usually go on to work in the foreign trade sector. A Protestant seminary was reopened in 2000 with assistance from foreign missionary groups; however, critics, which included at least one church official providing assistance, stated that the Government opened the seminary only to train personnel to facilitate reception of assistance funds from foreign faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGO's).

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Persons engaging in religious proselytizing may be arrested and are subject to harsh penalties, including imprisonment and prolonged detention without charge. The Government appears concerned that religiously based South Korean relief and refugee assistance efforts along the northeast border with the People's Republic of China may become entwined with more political goals, including overthrow of the regime. The food crisis apparently has heightened government concern about antiregime activity. An article in the Korean Workers Party newspaper in 1999 criticized "imperialists and reactionaries" for trying to use ideological and cultural infiltration, including religion, to destroy socialism from within. South Korean law requires all parties, including religious groups, traveling to North Korea or contacting North Koreans to request permission from the South Korean security agency. This requirement increases suspicions among North Korean officials about the intentions of such groups.

Little is known about the actual life of religious persons in the country. Members of government-recognized religious groups do not appear to suffer discrimination; in fact, some reports claim that they have been mobilized by the regime. Persons whose parents were believers but who themselves are nonpracticing are able to rise to at least the middle levels of the bureaucracy, despite their family background. Such individuals, as a category, suffered broad discrimination in the past. Members of underground churches connected to border missionary activity appear to be regarded as subversive elements.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government deals harshly with all opponents, including those engaging in religious practices deemed unacceptable to the regime. In April 1999, witnesses testified on the treatment of persons held in prison camps through the early 1990's. The witnesses stated that prisoners held on the basis of their religious beliefs generally were treated worse than other inmates were. One witness, a former prison guard, testified that because the authorities taught that "all religions are opium," those believing in God were regarded as insane. He recounted an instance in which a woman was kicked repeatedly and left with her injuries unattended for days because a guard overheard her praying for a child who was being beaten. Because the country is a closed society, such allegations could not be substantiated.

Religious and human rights groups outside the country have provided numerous, unconfirmed reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, or killed because of their religious beliefs. One unconfirmed report stated that 1 dozen Christians were killed by government authorities between October 1999 and April 2000. According to another unconfirmed report, 7 Christian men, ranging in age from 15 to 58 years, had been killed in April 2000. According to another unconfirmed report, 23 Christians were killed between October 1999 and April 2000; some reportedly were killed under falsified criminal charges, and some reportedly were tortured prior to their deaths. A religious NGO quoted an unnamed South Korean pastor's claims that 400 Christians were killed in 1999. These reports could not be confirmed or disproved because of the effectiveness of the Government in barring outside observers.

Nonetheless, the collective weight of anecdotal evidence of harsh treatment of unauthorized religious activity lends credence to such reports. The regime deals harshly with its critics, and views religious believers belonging to underground congregations or with ties to evangelical groups in North China as opponents. Reports of exe-

cutions, torture, and imprisonment of religious persons in the country continue to emerge.

The regime appears to have cracked down on unauthorized religious groups in recent years, especially persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China. There were several unconfirmed reports of killings of such persons during the year covered by the report. News reports indicated that the Government had taken steps to tighten control and increased punishments at the Chinese border, increasing the award for information on any person doing missionary work. One South Korean missionary asserted that the Government was conducting "education sessions" as a means for identifying Christian leaders so that they could be apprehended.

There is no reliable information on the number of religious detainees or prisoners, but there have been unconfirmed reports that some of those detained in the country are detained because of their religion.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There was no information available on societal attitudes toward religious freedom. The regime does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other invited guests the freedom of movement that would enable them to assess religious freedom in the country fully. The Unification Church, which has business ventures in the country, is constructing an interfaith religious facility in Pyongyang.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States does not have diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and has no official presence there. The country is a closed society and is extremely averse and resistant to outside influences. U.S. policy allows U.S. citizens to travel to the country, and a number of churches and religious groups have organized efforts to alleviate suffering caused by shortages of food and medicine.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 98,000 square miles, and the population is approximately 47 million. According to a 1995 government survey, the country's major religions and the number of adherents of each are: Buddhism: 10,321,012; Protestantism: 8,760,336; Roman Catholicism: 2,950,730; Confucianism: 210,927; Won Buddhism: 86,923; and other religions: 267,996. There are 21,593,000 atheists or nonpractitioners in the country. While the population has increased, the percentage of adherents of each faith has remained approximately the same. Although no official figures for the number of adherents are available, there are also several minority religions, such as the Elijah Evangelical Church, the Jesus Morning Star Church, and the All People's Holiness Church. Muslims, members of the Unification Church, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses also are present.

Among those practicing a faith, 41.7 percent said that they attend religious services or rituals at a temple or church at least once per week. Six percent responded that they attend religious services 2 to 3 times per month; 9.4 percent attend once per month; 6.8 percent attend once every 2 to 3 months; 26.9 percent attend once

per year; and 9.2 percent do not attend any services. Among practicing Buddhists, 1.2 percent responded that they attend religious services. A total of 71.5 percent of Protestants and 60.4 percent of Catholics responded that they attend religious services.

Buddhism has approximately 38 orders. The Catholic Church has 15 dioceses, including one based in Seoul. There are 83 Protestant denominations, including the Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and Presbyterian denominations, the Anglican Church, and the Korean Gospel Church Assembly.

There are 17 Protestant and 6 Catholic missionary groups operating in the country. The Protestant groups include: Christians in Action, Korea; the Church of the Nazarene, Korea Mission; the Overseas Mission Fellowship; and World Opportunities International, Korea Branch. The Catholic missionary groups include the Missionaries of Guadeloupe, the Prado Sisters, and the Little Brothers of Jesus.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion, and the Government does not subsidize or favor a particular religion.

There are no government-established requirements for religious recognition. To protect cultural properties such as Buddhist temples, in 1987 the Government instituted the Traditional Temples Preservation Law. In accordance with this law, Buddhist temples receive some subsidies from the Government for their preservation and upkeep.

In accordance with the March 1, 1999 change in the Immigration Control Law, foreign missionary groups no longer are required to register with the Government.

The Religious Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism takes the lead in organizing groups such as the Korea Religious Council and the Council for Peaceful Religions to promote interfaith dialog and understanding. The Bureau also is responsible for planning regular events such as the Religion and Art Festival, the Seminar for Religious Leaders, and the Symposium for Religious Newspapers and Journalists.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

In August 1998, Catholic priest Moon Kyu Hyun was arrested on charges of violating the National Security Law after returning from North Korea, where he allegedly wrote in praise of Kim Il Sung in a North Korean visitor's book and participated in a North Korean-sponsored reunification festival in Panmunjom. The eight other priests who traveled with him were not arrested, and Father Moon's arrest apparently was not based on his religious beliefs. He was released on bail in October 1998. In May 2000, Father Moon was sentenced to 2 years in prison and granted a 2-year stay of execution, equivalent to probation or a suspended sentence. He has appealed this decision, but no further action was taken on his case by the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between religious groups are generally amicable and free of incident, and religious tolerance is widespread; however, during the period covered by this report, there were press reports of so-called "Protestant fanatics" damaging Buddhist temples and artifacts through vandalism and arson. In mid-2000, a Christian was arrested for vandalism of Dong Kuk University, a Buddhist institution, and of some small temples. Such reports generated calls for religious tolerance and mutual respect in the media and among the general public. However, such incidents are rare, and religious leaders regularly meet both privately and under the Government's aegis to promote mutual understanding and tolerance. These meetings are given wide and favorable coverage by the media.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials also meet regularly with members of various religious communities to discuss issues related to human rights.

LAOS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. Some government officials committed abuses of citizens' religious freedom.

The Government's poor record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated in some aspects during the period covered by this report. The Government sought greater and more uniform regulation of the activities of religious organizations. Although some officials of the central Government occasionally attempted to restrain antireligious activities by local officials, such problems continued. Renunciation campaigns and harassment increased. However, while believers continued to be detained, arrested, and incarcerated, the number of detentions throughout the country decreased by half during the period covered by this report. During the period covered by this report, government authorities closed more than 65 churches. There were 20 known religious prisoners or detainees at the end of the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious groups in society, although there were some ethnic tensions that contributed to the deteriorating conditions for religious freedom.

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed the need for greater religious freedom at working levels of the central Government. The Charge pressed high-level government officials to allow greater religious freedom. U.S. Embassy representatives remained in contact with religious leaders. The Embassy helped to facilitate two visits by the Institute for Global Engagement, a private foundation dedicated to promoting religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Laos has a total area of approximately 85,000 square miles, and its estimated population is approximately 5.2 million. Estimates of the number of persons who practice various faiths rank Theravada Buddhism first, with from 60 to 65 percent of the population, especially among lowland Lao. Many believers in animism—an estimated 30 percent of the population—are found among Lao Theung (mid-slope dwelling) and Lao Soung (highland) minority tribes. Among lowland Lao, particularly in the countryside, there is both a certain syncretistic practice of, and tolerance for, animist customs among those who devote themselves to Buddhist beliefs and rituals. Christians, including Roman Catholics, constitute at most 1.5 percent of the population. Other minority religions include the Baha'i Faith, Islam, Mahayana Buddhism, and Confucianism. A very small number of citizens follow no religion.

In Vientiane there are five Mahayana Buddhist pagodas, two serving the Lao-Vietnamese community and three the Lao-Chinese community. Buddhist monks from Vietnam, China, and India have visited these pagodas freely to conduct services and minister to worshipers. There are at least four more large Mahayana Buddhist pagodas in other urban centers. There are also unconfirmed reports of other, smaller Mahayana pagodas in villages near the borders of Vietnam and China. A few of the pagodas are served by Buddhist nuns. Whether a monk could reside permanently in any of these pagodas is unknown; the key determinant appears to be the expense for the congregation. One Mahayana pagoda in Pakse has at least one monk from Vietnam in residence at all times.

The Roman Catholic Church has a following of 30,000 to 40,000 adherents. It is unable to operate effectively in the highlands and much of the north because churches are not allowed to register, and worship services are restricted in some areas. However, it has an established presence in five of the most populous central and southern provinces, where Catholics are able to worship openly. There are three bishops, located in Vientiane, Thakhek, and Pakse, who were able to visit Rome to confer with other bishops and the Pope. A Catholic seminary opened in Thakhek in early 1998 and is expected to train enough priests to serve the Catholic Community.

Approximately 250 to 300 Protestant congregations conducted services throughout the country for a Protestant community numbering from 30,000 to 40,000 persons.

The Government has granted permission to four Protestant congregations from the approved denominations to have church buildings in the Vientiane area. In addition the Lao Evangelical Church has church buildings in Savannakhet and Pakse. Several of these properties, belonging to the Lao Evangelical Church, were seized by the Government after 1975, but were returned to the church in the early 1990's.

There are approximately 400 adherents of Islam in the country, the vast majority of whom are foreign permanent residents. There are two active mosques in Vientiane that minister to the Sunni and Shafie branches of Islam.

The Baha'i Faith has more than 1,200 adherents and four centers: Two in Vientiane municipality, one in Vientiane province, and one in Pakse.

There were unconfirmed reports that small groups of followers of Confucianism and Taoism practice their beliefs in the larger cities.

Although the Government prohibits foreigners from proselytizing, there were reports that a very small number of both foreign missionaries and citizens were engaged in missionary work during the period covered by this report.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. The Constitution prohibits "all acts of creating division of religion or creating division among the people." The Lao Peoples Revolutionary Party (LPRP) and the Government appear to interpret this constitutional provision narrowly, thus inhibiting religious practice by all persons, including the Buddhist majority and a large population of animists. Although official pronouncements accept the existence of religion, they emphasize its potential to divide, distract, or destabilize. Some local officials appeared to enforce this law on the assumption that any religious conversion, for example, to Christianity, represented a "creating a division among the people."

The Constitution provides that the State "mobilizes and encourages" monks, nuns, and priests of other religions to participate in activities "beneficial to the nation and the people." The Department of Religious Affairs in the Lao Front for National Construction, an LPRP mass organization or peoples' network is responsible for overseeing all religions. Although the Government does not require registration, all functioning religious groups report to the Department of Religious Affairs quarterly. Reports of activities effectively constitute a system of approval; the approval process for new facilities is bureaucratic and time consuming and results in few new facilities.

The Department of Religious Affairs reportedly drafted regulations for religious organizations in late 1999. It arranged for the public reading of the draft regulations in November 2000, but held no substantive public consultations with religious leaders on the new guidelines during the period covered by this report. The draft regulations were under consideration by the Prime Minister at the end of the period covered by this report.

Although the State is secular in both name and practice, members of the LPRP and governmental institutions pay close attention to Theravada Buddhism, which is practiced by more than 60 percent of the population. The Government's observation, control of clergy, training support (including Marxist-Leninist training for monks), and oversight of temples and other facilities constitutes less a form of favoritism than a means to supervise and limit religious freedoms among the dominant Buddhist faith. Many persons regard Buddhism as both an integral part of the national culture and as a way of life.

Although the Government does not recognize the Vatican, the Papal Nuncio visits from Bangkok, Thailand and coordinates with the Government on assistance programs, especially for lepers and the disabled.

The Lao National Front has recognized two Protestant groups, the Lao Evangelical Church, the umbrella Protestant church, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The Front strongly encourages all other Protestant groups to become a part of the Lao Evangelical Church.

All persons in the Islamic community appear to be able to practice their faith openly, freely attending the two active mosques. Daily prayers and the weekly Jumaat prayer on Fridays proceed unobstructed and all Islamic celebrations are allowed. Citizens who are Muslims are able to go on the Hajj. Groups that conduct Tabligh teachings for the faithful come from Thailand once or twice per year.

Baha'i local spiritual assemblies and the national spiritual assembly routinely hold Baha'i 19-day feasts and celebrate all holy days. The national spiritual assembly meets regularly and is free to send a delegation to the Universal House of Justice in Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel.

The Government requires and routinely grants permission for formal links with coreligionists in other countries. In practice the line between formal and informal links is blurred, and relations generally are established without much difficulty.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government's tolerance of religion varied by region. In general central government authorities appeared unable—and in some cases, unwilling—to control or mitigate harsh measures that were taken by some local or provincial authorities against the practices of members of minority religious denominations. Although there was almost complete freedom to worship among unregistered groups in a few areas, particularly in the largest cities, government authorities in many regions allowed properly registered religious groups to practice their faith only under circumscribed conditions.

In Savannakhet, Luang Prabang, and Vientiane provinces, district authorities, supported by police, military, and representatives of the Lao Front for National Reconstruction closed more than 65 Christian churches during the period covered by this report. Unlike church closings in prior years, a number of these churches were of long standing, with the vast majority of believers having adopted the faith of their parents. For example, in Vientiane provincial authorities closed at least 12 churches, including a church in a refugee returnee village agreed to at the time that the village was established under U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) auspices.

Some minority religious groups reported that they were unable during the period covered by this report to register new congregations or receive permission to establish new places of worship, including places in Vientiane. Authorities required new denominations to join other religious groups having similar historical antecedents, despite clear differences between the groups' beliefs. Some groups did not submit applications for establishment of places of worship because they did not believe that their applications would be approved.

Although authorities tolerate diverse religious practices in the southern panhandle, a pattern of petty local harassment persists there. Many converts must run a gauntlet of harsh government interviews; however, after overcoming that initial barrier, they are permitted to practice their new faith unhindered.

The authorities continued to remain suspicious of patrons of the religious community other than Buddhism, including some Christian groups, in part because these faiths do not share a similar high degree of direction and incorporation into the government structure, as is the case with Theravada Buddhism. Some authorities criticized Christianity in particular as a Western or imperialist "import" into the country. They especially appear to suspect those religious groups that gain support from foreign sources, that aggressively proselytize among the poor or uneducated, that proselytize ethnic minorities, or that give targeted assistance to converts. The Government generally permitted major religious festivals of all established congregations without hindrance, but local authorities in some areas prohibited them or reversed prior authorizations. In one case in Vientiane province, authorities broke up a Christian church service on Christmas day.

At the end of the period covered by this report, the status of the Catholic Church in Luang Prabang town continued to be in doubt. There appears to be a congregation there but due to local government obstructions, worship may not be conducted readily. However, Catholics are now able to practice more openly in neighboring Sayabouly province, and a priest visits the Luang Prabang diocese regularly.

The Party controls the Buddhist clergy (Sangha) in an attempt to direct national culture. After 1975 the Government attempted to "reform" Buddhism and ceased to consider it the state religion, causing thousands of monks to flee abroad, where many remain in self-exile. The Government has only one semireligious holiday, Boun That Luang, which also is a major political and cultural celebration. However, the Government recognizes the popularity and cultural significance of Buddhist festivals, and many senior officials openly attend them. Buddhist clergy are featured prominently at important state and party functions. The Lao National Front directs the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Association, organized under a charter adopted in 1998. The Front continued to require monks to study Marxism-Leninism, to attend certain party meetings, and to combine the party-state policies with their teachings of Buddhism. In recent years, some individual temples have been able to receive support from Theravada Buddhist temples abroad, to expand the training of monks, and to focus more on traditional teachings.

The Government prohibits foreigners from proselytizing, although it permits foreign nongovernmental organizations with religious affiliations to work in the country. Foreigners caught distributing religious material may be arrested or deported. There is no prohibition against proselytizing by citizens. For example, Lao Christian

proselytizers were active in some areas, resulting in new conversions; however, there has been increased local government investigation and harassment of citizens who do so under the constitutional provision against creating division of religion.

The Government does not permit the printing of religious texts or their distribution outside a congregation and restricts the import of foreign religious texts and artifacts. However, in practice all approved congregations are able to supply texts to their adherents and decorate their places of worship.

In a few villages in which churches had been closed, security forces set up roadblocks during Sunday worship hours that prevented villagers from traveling to other places to conduct worship services. Many groups of coreligionists seeking to assemble in a new location are thwarted in attempts to meet, practice, or celebrate major religious festivals.

In rare cases, some local authorities harassed citizens who traveled outside the country for short-term religious training on the grounds that these persons had not provided their full travel plans to the authorities prior to departing from the country. Some church closings and forced renunciations in some districts of Savannakhet appeared to be reprisals against these persons. This restriction on freedom of movement appeared to affect primarily those who applied for crossborder passes into Thailand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the power to grant exit visas and usually grants them as a matter of routine. There is no evidence that the central Government investigated travelers on their return.

Government-issued identity cards report the religious affiliations of all adult citizens. In many areas, minority believers are identified incorrectly as "Buddhist" on identity cards in what appears to be routine bureaucratism and indifference. However, Christians who seek to be identified properly often are denied this right. When police question members of groups assembling for religious purposes, if the improperly issued ID card does not confirm the stated reason for assembling, the bearer may be subject to additional scrutiny and questioning.

Some evidence suggests that the Government makes little effort to ameliorate existing societal discrimination against ethnic minorities when that social tension can be cited as a pretext to restrict religious activities.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Authorities continued to arrest persons for their religious activities. Members of religious minorities were held in long-term detention or served jail terms at one time during the period covered by the report. The greatest number of detainees was from 30 to 35 at the end of 2000 and during the first 5 months of 2001. At the end of June 2001, the number of detainees stood at 20; 5 persons were arrested in Luang Prabang in May.

In addition a total of more than 45 other persons were arrested and detained at least briefly for their religious activities during the period covered by this report. Of those, 11 were known convicted religious prisoners and an estimated 9 religious detainees. These persons were detained in the following locations: Phongsaly, 1; Savannakhet, 3; and Luang Prabang, 5.

In Luang Prabang, three persons were tried and convicted; in Oudomxai, five persons were tried and convicted; in Houaphan, three persons were tried and convicted. Three of the members of religious minorities convicted in Oudomxai were convicted of working with foreign religious groups and given jail sentences to of from 12 to 15 years, which observers believed to be unduly harsh. In addition, the Government had not presented evidence to prove that the three ever left the country by the end of the period covered by this report.

In areas such as Sayabouly, Bolikhamxai, Vientiane province, Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, Oudomxai, and Phongsaly, the authorities arrested and detained without charge religious believers and their spiritual leaders. For example, in Luang Prabang, three evangelical Christians were sentenced in November 1999 to 5 years' imprisonment under Article 66 of the Penal Code for gathering to create social turmoil. Their sentences were reduced on appeal to 3 years in August 2000. Each of the three was a well-known Christian spiritual leader.

In February 2001, the Government deported five foreign practitioners of Falun Gong for distributing religious materials. In April 2001, security officials also briefly detained nine Filipino nationals associated with Campus Crusade who were proselytizing in Luang Prabang. After confiscating their religious materials, the authorities allowed them to leave the country on their scheduled tour.

In more isolated cases, provincial authorities instructed their officials to monitor and arrest persons who professed belief in Christianity, Islam, or the Baha'i Faith. For example, there is clear evidence that in Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Savannakhet provinces the authorities continued to force hundreds of Christians to sign renunciations of their faith. Some civil servants were threatened with loss of

their positions if they did not sign the renunciations. Citizens in Luang Prabang since 1999 reported that authorities ordered them to stop completely their Christian activities, under threat of arrest. The order appeared to apply only to new converts; believers of long standing were allowed to continue their beliefs but not to conduct worship or openly practice their faith. Despite general inaction by officials on their threats, such threats have had a chilling effect on religious practice in these provinces. The overwhelming preponderance of arrests in Laos have been of religious leaders and the most active and visible proselytizers, not of practitioners.

A few of the religious detainees are singled out for special mistreatment; some were forced to wear handcuffs while in detention.

Forced Religious Conversion

The enhanced status given to Buddhism in Luang Prabang—famed for its centuries-old Buddhist tradition and numerous temples—apparently led some local officials there to act more harshly toward minority religions, particularly toward Christian and Baha'i groups, than in other areas of the country. Some minor local officials reportedly forced renunciations that sometimes involved forced participation in animist traditions, including the drinking of animal blood. Other officials forced some believers to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes against their will.

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

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The various religious communities coexist amicably; society places a high premium on harmonious relations, and the dominant Buddhist faith is generally tolerant of other religious practices. Although there is no ecumenical movement, and there are no efforts to create greater mutual understanding, cultural mores generally instill respect for longstanding, well-known differences in belief.

However, interreligious tensions arose on rare occasions within some minority ethnic groups in response to proselytizing. For example, in one incident in May 2001, a large group of parents in a Hmong village was angry with Hmong Christian ministers because the young adults (some under age 18 and still under parental control) were abandoning their animist spiritual traditions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed religious freedom issues with the Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The Charge d'Affaires has raised high profile cases with high-ranking MFA officials and other Embassy officers have discussed the topic with relevant provincial governors. In addition the Embassy has an ongoing dialog with the Department of Religious Affairs in the Lao National Front and with other high ranking officials in the National Front.

Embassy representatives met with all of the major religious leaders in the country during the period covered by this report. Embassy officials have actively encouraged religious freedom despite an environment that is restricted by the government-owned and government-controlled media.

In December 2000 and June 2001, the Embassy helped to facilitate the visit of a representative of the Institute for Global Engagement, a private foundation promoting religious freedom and interdenominational dialog, who had frank exchanges with Lao officials.

MALAYSIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government places some restrictions on this right. Islam is the official religion; however, the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Religious minorities generally worship freely although with some restrictions. The Government enforces some restrictions on the establishment of non-Muslim places of worship and on the activities of political opponents in mosques.

The generally amicable relationship among believers in various religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 127,000 square miles and a population of approximately 23 million. According to government census figures, in 1991 59 percent of the population were Muslim; 18 percent practiced Buddhism; 8 percent Christianity; 6 percent Hinduism; 5 percent Confucianism, Taoism, or other religions that originated in China; 1 percent animism; and 0.5 percent other faiths, including Sikhism and the Baha'i Faith. Estimates of the religious practices of the remainder of the population were not stated.

Non-Muslims are concentrated in East Malaysia, major urban centers, and other areas.

In February 2000, the opposition-controlled state of Kelantan announced plans to form an Interreligious Council, but there were no reported further developments during the period covered by this report.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, Islam is the official religion, and the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly. Religious minorities include Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Sikh communities. Government funds support an Islamic religious establishment (the Government also grants limited funds to non-Islamic religious communities), and it is official policy to "infuse Islamic values" into the administration of the country. The Government imposes Islamic religious law on Muslims only in some matters and does not impose Islamic law beyond the Muslim community. Adherence to Islam is considered intrinsic to Malay ethnic identity, and therefore Islamic religious laws bind ethnic Malays.

The Registrar of Societies, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, registers religious organizations. Registration enables organizations to receive government grants and other benefits.

In May 2001, the Government decided not to approve the Falun Gong Preparatory Committee's application to register as a legal organization.

For Muslim children, religious education according to a government-approved curriculum is compulsory in public schools.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Muslims who wish to convert from Islam face severe obstacles. For Muslims, particularly ethnic Malays, the right to leave the Islamic faith and adhere to another religion is a controversial question, and in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change religions. The legal process of conversion is unclear; in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change their religion legally. In March 1999, the High Court ruled that secular courts have no jurisdiction to hear applications by Muslims to change religions. According to the ruling, the religious conversion of Muslims is solely the jurisdiction of Islamic courts. In April 2001, a High Court judge rejected the application of a Malay woman who argued that she had converted to Christianity, and requested that the term "Islam" be removed from her identity card. The judge ruled that an ethnic Malay is defined by the federal Constitution as "a person who professes the religion of Islam." The judge also reaffirmed the March 1999 High Court ruling and stated that only an Islamic court has jurisdiction to rule on the woman's supposed renunciation of Islam and conversion to Christianity. The ruling makes conversion of Muslims nearly impossible in practice.

The issue of Muslim apostasy is very sensitive. In 1998 after a controversial incident of attempted conversion, the Government stated that apostates (i.e., Muslims who wish to leave or have left Islam for another religion) would not face government punishment so long as they did not defame Islam after their conversion. The Government opposes what it considers deviant interpretations of Islam, maintaining that the "deviant" groups' extreme views endanger national security. In the past, the Government imposed restrictions on certain Islamic groups, primarily the small number of Shi'a. The Government continues to monitor the activities of the Shi'a minority.

In April 2000, the state of Perlis passed a Shari'a law subjecting Islamic "deviants" and apostates to 1 year of "rehabilitation." (Under the Constitution, religion, including Shari'a law, is a state government matter.) Leaders of the opposition Islamic Party have stated that the penalty for apostasy should be death.

In June 2000, the Government announced that all Muslim civil servants must attend religious classes, but only Islamic classes are conducted. In addition only teachers approved by the Government are employed.

The Government generally respects non-Muslims' right of worship; however, state governments carefully control the building of non-Muslim places of worship and the allocation of land for non-Muslim cemeteries. Approvals for such permits sometimes are granted very slowly. After a violent conflict in Penang between Hindus and Muslims in March 1998, the Government announced a nationwide review of unlicensed Hindu temples and shrines. However, implementation was not vigorous, and the program was not a subject of public debate during the period covered by this report.

In July 1999, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism (MCCBCHS), a nongovernmental organization representing minority religions, protested the planned implementation of Ministry of Housing and Local Government guidelines governing new non-Muslim places of worship. The MCCBCHS specifically complained that the guidelines required an area to have at least 2,000 adherents of a particular non-Muslim faith for a new non-Muslim place of worship to be approved (no such requirement exists for Muslim places of worship). In August 2000, these minimum population guidelines were relaxed somewhat. In addition after years of complaints by non-Islamic religious organizations about the need for the State Islamic Council in each state to approve construction of non-Islamic religious institutions, the Minister of Housing and Local Government announced that such approval would no longer be required. However, it is not known whether this change always is reflected in state policies and local decisions. For example, in Shah Alam, for several years the Selangor state authorities have blocked the construction of a Catholic Church.

Proselytizing of Muslims by members of other religions is prohibited strictly, although proselytizing of non-Muslims faces no obstacles. The Government discourages—and in practical terms forbids—the circulation in peninsular Malaysia of Malay-language translations of the Bible and distribution of Christian tapes and printed materials in Malay. However, Malay-language Christian materials are available. Some states have laws that prohibit the use of Malay-language religious terms by Christians, but the authorities do not enforce them actively. The distribution of Malay-language Christian materials faces few restrictions in East Malaysia.

In recent years, visas for foreign clergy no longer are restricted and in fact most visas were approved during the period covered by this report. Beginning in March 2000, representative non-Muslims were invited to sit on the immigration committee that approves such visa requests. Some non-Islamic groups complained that Christian proselytizing campaigns sometimes were conducted in unethical ways and tended to result in heightened religious animosity within the communities in which the ministers worked.

For Muslim children, religious education in public schools according to a government-approved curriculum is compulsory. There are no restrictions on home instruction.

The Government generally restricts remarks or publications that might incite racial or religious disharmony. This includes some statements and publications critical of particular religions, especially Islam. The Government also restricts the content of sermons at mosques.

After the November 1999 national elections, the Government significantly expanded efforts to restrict the activities of the Islamic opposition party at mosques. Several states announced measures including banning opposition-affiliated imams from speaking at mosques, more vigorously enforcing existing restrictions on the content of sermons, replacing mosque leaders and governing committees thought to be sympathetic to the opposition, and threatening to close down unauthorized mosques with ties to the opposition. The Government justified such measures as necessary to oppose the "politicization of religion" by the opposition.

In family and religious matters, all Muslims are subject to Shari'a law. According to some women's rights activists, women are subject to discriminatory interpretations of Shari'a law and inconsistent application of the law from state to state.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government continues to monitor the activities of the Shi'a minority, and the Government periodically detained members of what it considers Islamic "deviant sects" without trial or charge under the Internal Security Act during the period covered by this report.

In November 2000, the Shari'a High Court in the state of Kelantan, which is controlled by the Islamic opposition party, sentenced four persons to 3 years in prison for disregarding a lower court order to recant their alleged heretical beliefs and "return to the true teachings of Islam." The High Court rejected their argument that Shari'a law has no jurisdiction over them because they had ceased to be Muslims.

In November 2000, four prisoners were convicted of apostasy by a Shari'a court. There were no reports of religious detainees during the period covered by this report.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country's various believers generally live amicably.

The Government has a comprehensive system of preferences in the administration of housing, education, business, and other areas for Bumiputras, ethnic Malay Muslims, and a few other groups that practice various religions.

Ecumenical and interfaith organizations of the non-Muslim religions exist and include the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism, the Malaysian Council of Churches, and the Christian Federation of Malaysia. Muslim organizations generally do not participate in ecumenical bodies.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy representatives have met with some religious leaders.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total land area is approximately 67 square miles, and the estimated population in 2000 was 52,000. Major religions include the United Church of Christ (formerly Congregational) with 54.8 percent of the population; the Assembly of God with 25.8 percent; and the Roman Catholic Church with 8.4 percent. Also represented are Bukot Nan Jesus (also known as Assembly of God Part Two) with 2.8 percent; the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) with 2.1 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists with 0.9 percent; Full Gospel with 0.7 percent; and the Baha'i Faith with 0.6 percent. Persons without any religious affiliation account for 1.5 percent of the population, and another 1.4 percent belong to religions not named in the 1999 census.

There are missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Seventh-Day Adventists. Religious schools include the Assumption Catholic School and the Rita Christian School as well as facilities operated by the United Church of Christ and the Assembly of God.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion. Missionary groups are allowed to operate freely.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversions

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although Christianity is a dominant social and cultural force, there are amicable relations between the country's religious denominations. Nonbelievers, who constitute a very small percentage of the residents, do not suffer discrimination. Typically, governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister, cleric, or church official.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promotion of human rights.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total area is approximately 260 square miles, and the population is approximately 133,000. Most Protestant denominations as well as the Roman Catholic Church are present on the four major islands of the country. The most prevalent Protestant denomination is the United Church of Christ. Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon), and adherents of the Baha'i Faith also are represented. On the island of Kosrae, 99 percent of the population are members of the United Church of Christ; on Pohnpei approximately 50 percent of the population are Protestant and 50 percent are Catholic; on Chuuk and Yap, approximately 60 percent are Catholic and 40 percent are Protestant. There is a small group of Buddhists on Pohnpei.

Most immigrants are Filipino Catholics, who join local Catholic Churches.

On the island of Pohnpei, clan divisions mark religious boundaries in some measure. More Protestants live on the western side of the island, while more Catholics live on the eastern side.

Missionaries of many faiths work within the nation, including Seventh Day Adventists, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Bill of Rights forbids establishment of a state religion and governmental restrictions on freedom of religion. There is no state religion.

Foreign missionary groups operate without hindrance on all four islands.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

MONGOLIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law limits proselytizing, and some groups that sought to register have faced bureaucratic harassment.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 580,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 2.65 million. Buddhism and the country's traditions are tied closely, and it appears likely that almost all ethnic Mongolians (93 percent of the population) practice some form of Buddhism. Lamaist Buddhism of the Tibetan variety is the traditional and dominant religion.

Since the end of Socialist controls on religion and the country's traditions in 1990, active interest in Buddhism and its practice have grown. The Buddhist community is not completely homogeneous, and there are several competing schools, including a small group that believes that the sutras should be in the Mongolian language and that all members of religious clergy should be citizens.

Kazakhs, most of whom are Muslim, are the largest of the ethnic minorities, constituting approximately 4 percent of the population nationwide and 85 percent of the population of the western province, Bayan-Olgii. Kazakhs operate Islamic schools for their children. They sometimes receive financial assistance from religious organizations in Kazakhstan and Turkey. The Kazakhs' status as the majority ethnic group in Bayan-Olgii was established in the former Socialist period and continues in much the same circumstances.

Foreign missionaries include Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, various evangelical Protestant groups, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and adherents of the Baha'i Faith.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law limits proselytizing, and some groups that sought to register have faced bureaucratic harassment. The Constitution explicitly recognizes the separation of church and state, and the law regulating the relationship between church and state was passed in 1993 and amended in 1995.

Although there is no state religion, traditionalists believe that Buddhism is the "natural religion" of the country. The Government has contributed to the restoration of several Buddhist sites. These are important religious, historical, and cultural centers. The Government does not subsidize the Buddhist religion otherwise.

Religious groups must register with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs. While the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs is responsible for registrations, local assemblies have the authority to approve applications at the local level.

Under the law, the Government may supervise and limit the number of places of worship and clergy for organized religions; however, there were no reports that the Government did so during the period covered by this report. The registration process is decentralized with several layers of bureaucracy, in which officials sometimes demand financial benefits in exchange for authorization. In addition registration in the capital may not be sufficient if a group intends to work in the countryside where local registration also is necessary. Some groups encountered harassment during the

registration process, including demands by midlevel city officials for financial contributions in return for securing legal status. When registration was completed, the same authorities threatened some religious groups with withdrawal of approval. In general it appears that difficulties in registering primarily are the consequence of bureaucratic action by local officials and attempts to extort financial assistance for projects not funded by the city. Of the 260 temples and churches founded since 1990, approximately 150 are registered, including 90 Buddhist, 40 Christian, and 4 Baha'i, in addition to 1 Muslim mosque and other organizations. Contacts with coreligionists outside the country are allowed.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

While the law does not prohibit proselytizing, it limits it by forbidding the use of incentives, pressure, or deceptive methods to introduce religion. With the opening of the country following the 1990 democratic changes, religious groups began to arrive to provide humanitarian assistance and open new churches, which resulted in some friction between missionary groups. Proselytizing by registered religious groups is allowed, although a Ministry of Education directive bans mixing foreign language or other training with religious teaching or instruction. The Government enforced this law particularly in the capital area.

Some missionary groups are still in the process of registering with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs. The process is protracted for some groups, but others are registered quickly.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Citizens generally are tolerant of the beliefs of others, and there were no reports of religiously motivated violence; however, there has been some friction between missionary groups and citizens because humanitarian assistance in the past was mixed with proselytizing activity. Some conservatives have criticized foreign influences on youth and children, including religion and the use of incentives to attract believers.

There are no significant ecumenical movements or interfaith dialog.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officials have discussed with midlevel bureaucrats specific registration difficulties encountered by Christian churches. These discussions focused attention on U.S. concern for religious freedom and opposition to corruption; the discussions resulted in a clarification of the requirements for registration.

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with Buddhist leaders. In addition the Embassy met with representatives of U.S. based religious and humanitarian organizations. The Embassy also maintains contact with the staff of the local office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the U.N. Development Program to discuss human rights and religious freedom.

NAURU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Nauru has a total area of approximately 10 square miles, and its population an estimated 10,000. Christianity is the primary religion. Approximately two-thirds of Christians are Protestants, and the remaining one-third are Roman Catholics. The population as a whole is 58 percent Nauruan, 26 percent other Pacific Islanders, 8 percent European, and 8 percent Chinese. Some of the latter group may be Buddhist or Taoist.

Foreign missionaries introduced Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are a few active Christian missionary organizations, including representatives of the Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic faiths.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government has not taken specific actions to improve interreligious relations. However, it has set aside land for the renovation and construction of places of worship.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relations in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Fiji visit periodically to discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. They also meet with leaders of religious communities and nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in religious freedom.

The U.S. Embassy actively supports efforts to improve and expand governmental and societal awareness of and protection for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion.

NEW ZEALAND

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an island nation with a total area of approximately 99,000 square miles and a population of approximately 3.8 million. The religious composition of the country is predominantly Christian but is becoming more diverse. According to the 1996 census, approximately 60.6 percent of citizens identified themselves as Christian or as affiliated members of individual Christian denominations; less than 3 percent were affiliated with non-Christian religions. The four major Christian denominations of Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches experienced a decline in membership between 1991 and 1996, with the proportion of the

population affiliated with these denominations falling from 57.6 percent to 49.1 percent. Anglicans remained by far the largest Christian denomination, with 18 percent of the population in 1996. Pentecostals were the only major Christian group to experience significant growth (55 percent) during the same period. Among non-Christian religions, the number of Buddhists and Muslims more than doubled, while the number of Hindus increased by approximately 50 percent, although each of these groups still constitutes less than 1 percent of the population. The number of persons who indicated no religious affiliation also increased markedly between 1991 and 1996, rising by 33 percent to over one-fourth of the population. The indigenous Maori (approximately 15 percent of the population) overwhelmingly are followers of Presbyterianism, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Ratana, Ringatu, and other faiths.

According to 1996 census data, the following were the numbers and percentages of the population's religious affiliation: Anglican—631,764 (18.42 percent); Roman Catholic—473,112 (13.79 percent); Presbyterian—458,289 (13.36 percent); Methodist—121,650 (3.55 percent); Baptist—53,613 (1.56 percent); Mormons—41,166 (1.20 percent); Pentecostal—39,228 (1.14 percent); Ratana (a Maori/Christian group with services in the Maori language)—36,450 (1.06 percent); Buddhist—28,131 (0.82 percent); Hindu—25,293 (0.74 percent); Brethren—19,950 (0.58 percent); Jehovah's Witnesses—19,524 (0.57 percent); Assemblies of God—17,520 (0.51 percent); Salvation Army—14,625 (0.43 percent); Islam—13,548 (0.39 percent); Seventh-Day Adventist—12,324 (0.36 percent); Apostolic Church of New Zealand—8,913 (0.26 percent); Congregational—8,838 (0.26 percent); Ringatu (a Maori/Christian group with services in the Maori language)—8,268 (0.24 percent); Orthodox Christian—6,936 (0.20 percent); Spiritualist—5,097 (0.15 percent); Lutheran—5,007 (0.15 percent); Jewish—4,812 (0.14 percent); Churches of Christ—4,233 (0.12 percent); Reformed—3,288 (0.10 percent); Baha'i—3,111 (0.09 percent); Elim—3,018 (0.09 percent); Sikh—814 (0.08 percent); Protestant—2,778 (0.08 percent); Exclusive Brethren—1,986 (0.06 percent); Christadelphians—1,743 (0.05 percent); Uniting/Union Church—1,728 (0.05 percent); evangelical—1,584 (0.05 percent); Religious Society of Friends—1,161 (0.03 percent); Satanist—909 (0.03 percent); Worldwide Church of God—624 (0.02 percent); Rastafarianism—582 (0.02 percent); Taoism—561 (0.02 percent); Nazarene—459 (0.01 percent); Hauhau—408 (0.01 percent); Christian Science—294 (0.01 percent); Revival Centres—273 (0.01 percent); Unitarian—267 (0.01 percent); Hare Krishna—258 (0.01 percent); Church of Scientology—216 (0.01 percent); Commonwealth Covenant Church—168 (less than 0.01 percent); Unification Church—135 (less than 0.01 percent); other Christian—188,670 (5.50 percent); other non-Christian—4,596 (0.13 percent); other response including no religion—893,910 (26.06 percent); object to statement—256,593 (7.48 percent); not specified—187,881 (5.50 percent); total—3,618,303 (100.00 percent).

The Auckland statistical area (which accounts for roughly 30 percent of the country's total population) exhibits the greatest religious diversity. Farther south on the North Island, and on the South Island, the percentage of citizens who identified themselves with Christian faiths increased while those affiliated with non-Christian religions decreased.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels protects this right and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Education Act of 1964 specifies in its "secular clause" that teaching within public primary schools "shall be entirely of a secular character;" however, it also permits religious instruction and observances in state primary schools within certain parameters. If the school committee in consultation with the principal or head teacher so determines, any class may be closed at any time of the school day within specified limits for the purposes of religious instruction given by voluntary instructors. However, attendance at religious instruction or observances is not compulsory. According to the Legal Division of the Ministry of Education, public secondary schools also may permit religious instruction at the discretion of their individual school boards. The Ministry of Education does not keep centralized data on how many individual primary or secondary schools permit religious instruction or observances, but a curriculum division spokesperson maintains that in practice religious instruction, if it occurs at a particular school, usually is scheduled after normal school hours.

Under the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975, the Government, in response to a burgeoning general primary school role and financial difficulties ex-

perienced by a large group of Catholic parochial schools, permitted the incorporation of private schools into the public school system. Designated as “integrated schools,” they were deemed to be of a “unique character” and permitted to receive public funding provided that they allowed space for nonpreference students. A total of 303 of the 2,784 primary schools are integrated schools with this designation. More than 250 of these 303 schools are Catholic; there are a handful of non-Christian or non-religious schools, such as Islamic, Hare Krishna, or Rudolph Steiner—a school of spiritual philosophy. Primary school students are not required to attend an integrated school.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Monday are official holidays, and some businesses are fined if they attempt to operate on these holidays. The small but growing non-Christian communities has called for the Government to take into account the increasingly diverse religious makeup regarding holiday flexibility. In response, the Government acted to remove some constraints on trade associated with the Christian faith. In 2001 the Government enacted new legislation that permits several types of business to remain open on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. However, many other businesses still are fined if they attempt to operate on these Christian holidays.

In 1993 the University of Canterbury granted an honors thesis to a student who reportedly denied the impact of the Holocaust. The controversial thesis was embargoed until 2000, when the author issued an apology and acknowledged mistakes in an addendum. Many members of the country’s Jewish community criticized the university’s refusal to rescind the degree or withdraw the thesis.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist among the various religious communities in society. Incidents of religiously motivated violence are extremely rare. Due to the infrequency of their occurrence and difficulties in clearly establishing such motivations, the police do not attempt to maintain data on crimes that may have been motivated by religion.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religion freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

PALAU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religion freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

An archipelago of more than 300 islands in the Western Pacific Ocean, the country has a total land area of 188 square miles and a population of approximately 19,000 persons; 70 percent live in the temporary capital, Koror. There are 19 Christian denominations. The Roman Catholic Church is the dominant religion, and approximately 65 percent of the population are members. Other religions with a sizable membership include the Evangelical Church (with approximately 2,000 members), the Seventh-Day Adventists (with approximately 1,000), the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) (about 300), and Jehovah's Witnesses (about 70). Modekngai, which embraces both pagan and Christian beliefs and is unique to the country, has about 800 adherents. There also is a small group of Bangladeshi Muslims in the country who practice their faith actively. The primarily Catholic Filipino labor force (approximately 3,100 persons) practice their faith actively. A large percentage of citizens do not practice their faith actively.

Since the arrival of Jesuit priests in the early nineteenth century, foreign missionaries have been active in the country. Some missionaries have been in the country for years and speak the language fluently. A number of groups (the Baha'i Faith, the Roman Catholic Church, the Chinese Agriculture Mission, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Evangelical Church, the High Adventure Ministries, the Iglesia ni Cristo, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Korean Church, the Korea Presbyterian Church, the Pacific Missionary Aviation, the Palau Assembly of God, and the Seventh-Day Adventists) have missionaries in the country on proselytizing or teaching assignments. The Seventh-Day Adventist and the Evangelical Churches have missionaries teaching in their respective elementary and high schools.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government does not promote or restrain religious activities; however, the Government regulates the establishment of religious organizations by requiring them to obtain charters as nonprofit organizations from the office of the Attorney General. This registration process is not protracted, and the Government did not deny any groups registration during the period covered by this report. As nonprofit organizations, these churches and missions are tax exempt.

Foreign missionaries are required to obtain a missionary permit at the office of immigration; however, there were no reports that the Government denied these permits to any group during the period covered by this report.

The Government does not require or permit religious instruction in public schools. There is government financial support for religious schools; the Government also provides small scale financial assistance to cultural organizations.

There are two religious groups with independent radio stations, the High Adventure Ministries and the Seventh-Day Adventists.

The Government recognizes Christmas as a national holiday. There is active participation by the majority of the country's religious groups in Easter and Christmas services. Even though the Government does not sponsor religious groups or promote religious activities, official ceremonies—national or state level, public and private graduations, etc.—always are conducted with a prayer to open and close the ceremonies.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Employers have complained to the Division of Labor under the Ministry of Commerce and Trade that the religious practices of Bangladeshi Muslims interfere both with activity in the workplace and with the living arrangements of the employing families. In response the Ministry decided to deny work permits to Bangladeshi workers in the future. Workers present in the country at the time of the decision were not expelled.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The various religious organizations are cordial and civil with each other, and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an island nation covering 280,773 square miles, and its population is approximately 4.6 million. According to the 1990 census, the churches with the largest number of members are the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church, the Evangelical Alliance, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. At that time, 97 percent of citizens identified themselves as members of a Christian church. Less than 0.3 percent identified themselves as non-Christian, and less than 3 percent identified themselves as having no religion. Reports indicate that approximately 1,000 persons practice Islam. Many citizens combine their Christian faith with some pre-Christian traditional indigenous practices.

The mainstream churches proselytized on the island of New Guinea in the nineteenth century. Colonial governments initially assigned different missions to different geographic areas. Since territory in the country is strongly aligned with language group and ethnicity, this colonial policy led to the identification of certain churches with certain ethnic groups. However, churches of all denominations now are found in all parts of the country. The Muslim community has a mosque in the capital of Port Moresby.

Nonmainstream Christian churches and non-Christian religious groups are active throughout the country. According to the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches, both Muslim and Confucian missionaries have become active, and foreign missionary activity in general is high. The Pentecostal Church in particular has made inroads into the congregations of the more established churches, and nearly every conceivable movement and faith that proselytizes has representatives in the country. The Summer Institute of Linguistics is an important missionary institution; it translates the New Testament into native languages.

The Roman Catholic Church is the only mainstream church that still relies to a large extent on foreign clergy.

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The Constitution's provisions for freedom of conscience, thought, and religion consistently have been interpreted to mean that any religion may be practiced or propagated so long as it does not interfere with the freedom of others. The predominance of Christianity is recognized in the preamble of the Constitution, which refers to "our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours."

In general the Government does not subsidize the practice of religion. The Department of Family and Church Affairs has a nominal policymaking role that largely has been confined to reiterating the Government's respect for church autonomy.

Most of the country's schools and many of its health services were built and continue to be run by the churches, and the Government provides support for those institutions. At independence the Government recognized that it had neither the funds nor the human capital with which to take over these institutions and agreed to subsidize their operations on a per pupil/per patient basis. The Government also pays the salaries of national teachers and health staff. Although the education and health infrastructures continue to rely heavily on church-run institutions, some schools and clinics have closed periodically because they did not receive the promised government support. These problems are due in part to endemic financial management problems in the Government.

Immigrants and noncitizens are free to practice their religion, and foreign missionary groups are permitted to proselytize and engage in other activities.

It is the policy of the Department of Education to set aside 1 hour per week for religious instruction in the public schools. Church representatives teach the lessons, and the students attend the class operated by the church of their parents' choice. Children whose parents do not wish them to attend the classes are excused.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

As new missionary movements proliferate, representatives of some established churches and some individuals have questioned publicly whether such activity is desirable. Some persons have proposed legislation to limit such activity. However, the courts and government practice have upheld the constitutional right to freedom of speech, thought, and belief, and no legislation to curb those rights has been adopted. For example, when the Muslim community applied to the Land Board for permission to acquire property on which to build a mosque, some churches objected, citing the country's historical character as a Christian country. Nevertheless permission to acquire the land was granted. After the mosque was built, the press continued to report on the public debate over whether Islam was a threat to the country. Most denominations, including the Catholic Bishops Conference, supported the establishment of the mosque.

The Papua New Guinea Council of Churches makes the only known effort at interfaith dialog. The Council members consist of the Anglican, Gutnius and Union Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran and United churches, and the Salvation Army. In addition it has 15 parareligious organizations, including the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which participate in its activities; however, the self-financing Council has only Christian affiliates. The ecumenical work of the Council of Churches is confined primarily to cooperation between churches on social welfare projects.

SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy engages the Government on a wide range of human rights issues, including religious freedom. The Ambassador continued discussions with the Council of Churches and individual church leaders throughout the period covered by this report. The Ambassador and the Embassy's consular officer visit regularly with U.S. citizen missionaries of all denominations.

PHILIPPINES

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, although there were a few exceptions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Adherents of all faiths are free to exercise their religious beliefs in all parts of the country without government interference or restriction; however, socioeconomic disparity between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority has contributed to persistent conflict in certain provinces. The principal remaining armed insurgent Muslim group continued to seek greater autonomy or an independent Islamic state. Peace talks between the Government and this group stalled during June 2000 as violent clashes claimed many lives on both sides. Negotiations began again after Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became President in January 2001. In June 2001, the Government reached agreement with this group to implement a cease-fire agreement, cooperate in efforts to resettle displaced persons, and undertake development projects in areas of conflict. Militant Muslim splinter groups have engaged in terrorism. Moderate Muslim leaders strongly criticized these tactics.

There is some ethnic and cultural discrimination against Muslims by Christians. This has led some Muslims to seek successfully a degree of political autonomy for Muslims in the southwestern part of the country.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The Philippines has a land area of approximately 118,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 76.4 million. Over 85 percent of citizens of this former Spanish colony claim membership in the Roman Catholic Church, according to the most recent official census data on religious preference (1990). Other Christian denominations together comprise approximately 8.7 percent of the population. Followers of the Islamic faith totaled 4.6 percent and Buddhists 0.1 percent. Indigenous and other religious traditions accounted for 1.2 percent of those surveyed. Atheists and persons who did not designate a religious preference accounted for 0.3 percent of the population.

Some academic experts question the accuracy of the statistical sampling in the 1990 census. Some Muslim scholars argue that census takers seriously undercounted the number of Muslims because of security concerns in western Mindanao, where Muslims still are a majority, that often prevented them from conducting accurate counts outside urban areas. Current estimates place the number of Muslims at at least 5 million, or approximately 7 percent of the population. Muslims reside principally in Mindanao and nearby islands and are the largest single minority religious group in the country.

There is no available data on "nominal" members of religious organizations. Estimates of nominal members of the largest group, Roman Catholics, range from 60 to 65 percent of the total population. These estimates are based on regular church attendance. El Shaddai, a lay charismatic movement affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, has grown rapidly in the last decade; it claims approximately 5 million active members within the country and an additional 300,000 members in other countries.

Most Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. There is a small number of Shi'a believers in the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Zamboanga del Sur. Approximately 19 percent of the population of Mindanao is Muslim, according to the 1990 census. Members of the Muslim minority are concentrated in five provinces of western Mindanao: Maguindanao; Lanao del Sur; Basilan; Sulu; and Tawi-Tawi. There also are significant Muslim communities in nearby Mindanao provinces, including Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, and North Cotabato. There are sizable Muslim neighborhoods in metropolitan Manila on Luzon, and in Palawan.

Among Protestant and other Christian groups, there are numerous denominations, including Seventh Day-Adventists, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Assemblies of God, and Philippine (Southern) Baptist denominations. In addition there are two churches established by Filipino religious leaders, the Independent Church of the Philippines or Aglipayan and the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ). A majority of the country's nearly 12 million indigenous people reportedly are Christians. However, observers note that many indigenous groups mix elements of their native religions with Christian beliefs and practices.

Christian missionaries work in most parts of western Mindanao, often within Muslim communities.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, although there were a few exceptions. Although Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism, is the dominant religion, there is no state religion. The Government generally does not restrict adherents of other religions from practicing their faith.

Organized religions must register with the Securities and Exchange Commission as nonstock, nonprofit organizations and with the Bureau of Internal Revenue to establish their tax-exempt status. There were no reports of discrimination in the registration system during the period covered by this report.

The Government provides no direct subsidies to institutions for religious purposes, including aid to the extensive school systems maintained by religious orders and church groups. The Office of Muslim affairs, funded through the Office of the President, generally limits its activities to fostering Islamic religious practices, although

it also has the authority to coordinate projects for economic growth in predominantly Muslim areas. The office's Philippine Pilgrimage Authority helps coordinate the travel of religious pilgrimage groups to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, by providing bus service to and from airports, hotel reservations, and guides. The Presidential Assistant for Muslim Affairs helps coordinate relations with countries that have large Islamic populations that have contributed to Mindanao's economic development and to the peace process with insurgent groups.

The four-province Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established in 1990 to respond to the demand of Muslims for local autonomy in areas where they are a majority or a substantial minority. The provinces comprising the ARMM are: Maguindanao; Lanao del Sur; Sulu; and Tawi-Tawi.

In 1996 the Government signed a peace agreement with the Islamic Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), concluding an often violent struggle that had lasted more than 20 years. A plebiscite on autonomy for an expanded autonomous region, promised in the 1996 peace agreement, again was postponed during the period covered by this report. The Government is working with the MNLF's leaders on a variety of development programs to reintegrate former MNLF fighters into the market economy through jobs and business opportunities. In addition the integration of ex-MNLF fighters into the armed forces and police has eased suspicion between Christians and Muslims.

Peace negotiations between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the chief remaining armed Muslim separatist group, stalled during June 2000. During the second half of 2000, government forces completed the military offensives begun during the first half of the year, overrunning most MILF strongholds. Negotiations began again after Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became President in January 2001. In June 2001, the Government reached agreement with the MILF to implement a cease-fire agreement, cooperate in efforts to resettle displaced persons, and undertake development projects in areas of conflict.

In June 2000, following persistent reports that troops operating against Muslim separatists in Mindanao had desecrated mosques, the Secretary of National Defense ordered the AFP to refrain from such action. The Department of National Defense issued code-of-conduct instructions that included provisions that military offensives could not be begun during Muslim prayer hours "unless absolutely required."

The Code of Muslim Personal Laws, enacted in 1977, recognizes the Shari'a (Islamic law) civil law system as part of national law; however, it applies only to Muslims, and applies regardless of their place of residence in the country. As part of their strategy for a moral and religious revival in western Mindanao, some Muslim religious leaders (ulamas) argue that the Government should allow Islamic courts to extend their jurisdiction to criminal law cases, a step beyond the many civil law cases that they already can settle as part of the judicial system in western Mindanao. Some ulamas also support the MILF's goal of forming an autonomous region governed in accordance with Islamic law.

Based on a traditional policy of promoting moral education, local public schools make available to church groups the opportunity to teach moral values during school hours. Attendance is not mandatory, and various churches rotate in sharing classroom space. In many parts of Mindanao, Muslim students routinely attend Catholic schools from elementary to university level. These students are not required to undertake Catholic religious instruction.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Muslims, who are concentrated in the most impoverished parts of western Mindanao, complained that the Government has not made sufficient effort toward economic development in those areas. Some Muslim religious leaders asserted that Muslims suffer from economic discrimination, which is reflected in the Government's failure to provide money to stimulate southwestern Mindanao's sluggish economic development. Leaders in both Christian and Muslim communities contend that economic disparities and ethnic tensions, more than religious differences, are at the root of the modern separatist movement that emerged in the early 1970's.

Intermittent government efforts to integrate Muslims into political and economic society have achieved only limited success to date. Many Muslims claim that they continue to be underrepresented in senior civilian and military positions, and have cited the lack of proportional Muslim representation in the national government institutions. At the end of the period covered by this report, there was one Muslim cabinet secretary and two Muslim senior presidential advisors, but no Muslim senators or Supreme Court justices. There are 7 Muslims in the 206-member House of Representatives.

In July 2000, many Muslims complained of the Government's disrespect for Muslim religious practices when then-President Estrada celebrated an Armed Forces of

the Philippines (AFP) military victory by holding a pork and beer feast at the former headquarters of the separatist MILF.

The Government placed responsibility on the MILF for mass killings on July 16, 2000 in Bumbaran, Lanao del Sur Province, but after subsequent investigation, the Commission on Human Rights stated that the perpetrators could have been non-MILF separatists posing as MILF members, or may have been renegade former members of the MNLF. MILF soldiers reportedly had forced approximately 33 civilians, all Christians, into a Muslim prayer house in the early morning. After a nearby battle during the day between the MILF and government forces, armed persons fired on the civilians in custody, killing 21 persons and injuring 9 others.

The profit-oriented terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) claims to seek the immediate establishment of an independent Islamic state in the southwestern part of the country. In fact, however, the ASG is a loose collection of criminal-terrorist gangs, and its religious affiliation is rejected by mainstream Muslim leaders. All ASG kidnap victims taken during 2000 except one had been released by mid-April 2001, but in late May the ASG kidnaped another 20 hostages, including several foreign nationals. More hostages were taken in June 2001, and several were beheaded by their captors. Most of those hostages remained in captivity at mid-year. Although many Muslims believe that discrimination against them is rooted in their religious culture, most do not favor the establishment of a separate state, and the overwhelming majority reject terrorism as a means of achieving a satisfactory level of autonomy. Mainstream Muslim leaders, both domestic and foreign, have strongly criticized the actions of the ASG and its renegade offshoots as "un-Islamic."

Forced Religious Conversions

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious affiliation is customarily a function of a person's family, ethnic group, or tribal membership. Historically, Muslims have been alienated socially from the dominant Christian majority, and there is some ethnic and cultural discrimination against Muslims.

Christian and Muslim communities live in close proximity throughout central and western Mindanao and, in many areas, their relationship is harmonious. However, efforts by the dominant Christian population to resettle in traditionally Muslim areas, particularly over the past 60 years, have brought resentment from some Muslim residents. Muslims view Christian proselytizing as an extension of an historical effort by the Christian majority to deprive them of their homeland and cultural identity as well as their religion. Christian missionaries work in most parts of western Mindanao, often within Muslim communities.

On August 27, 2000, unidentified persons attacked a vehicle and killed 12 passengers, all Muslims, in Carmen, North Cotabato. The Government blamed the MILF, but the provincial governor stated that those responsible may have been civilians seeking revenge on Muslims.

The national culture, with its emphasis on familial, tribal, and regional loyalties, creates informal barriers whereby access to jobs or resources is provided first to those of one's own family or group. Some employers have a biased expectation that Muslims have a lower educational level. Predominantly Muslim provinces in Mindanao continue to lag behind the rest of the island of Mindanao in almost all aspects of socioeconomic development.

Religious dialog and cooperation among the country's various religious communities generally are amicable. Many religious leaders are involved in ecumenical activities and also in interdenominational efforts to alleviate poverty. The Interfaith Group, which is registered as a nongovernmental organization, includes Roman Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant church representatives who have joined together in an effort to support the Mindanao peace process through work with communities of former combatants. Besides social and economic support, the Interfaith Group seeks to encourage Mindanao communities to instill their faiths in their children.

Amicable ties among religious groups are reflected in many nonofficial organizations. The leadership of human rights groups, trade union confederations, and industry associations represent many religious persuasions.

The Bishops-Ulams Conference, which meets monthly to deepen mutual doctrinal understanding between Roman Catholic and Muslim leaders in Mindanao, helps further the Mindanao peace process. The co-chairs of the conference are the Archbishop of Davao, Ferdinand Capalla, and the president of the Ulama Associa-

tion, Majid Mutilan, the outgoing governor of Lanao del Sur province. The conference seeks to foster exchanges at the local level between parish priests and local Islamic teachers. Paralleling the dialog fostered by religious leaders, the Silsila Foundation in Zamboanga City hosts a regional exchange among Muslim and Christian academics and local leaders meant to reduce bias and promote cooperation.

The Government's National Ecumenical Commission (NEC) fosters interfaith dialog among the major religious groups—the Roman Catholic Church, Islam, Iglesia ni Cristo, the Philippine Independent Church (Aglipayan), and Protestant denominations. The Protestant churches are represented in the NEC by the National Council of Churches of the Philippines and the Council of Evangelical Churches of the Philippines. Members of the NEC met periodically with the President to discuss social and political questions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy staff members have met with representatives of all major faiths to learn about their concerns on a variety of issues. In addition the U.S. Government supports the Government's peace process with Muslim insurgents in Mindanao, which has the potential to contribute to a better climate for interfaith cooperation. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides training and economic assistance to former Muslim combatants who seek jobs and business opportunities, and support for their agricultural livelihood projects.

SAMOA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Samoa is comprised of two major islands that total approximately 1,000 square miles, and the population is about 180,000 persons. Most live on the island of Upolu, where the capital, Apia, is located. As a result of a strong missionary movement in the 19th century, nearly 100 percent of the population is Christian; most of the population is Protestant, although Roman Catholicism is a significant force. The religious distribution of the population is estimated to be: Congregational Christian Church (43 percent); Catholic (21 percent); Methodist (17 percent); the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (10 percent); and Seventh-Day Adventist (about 3 percent). There are small congregations of other Christian denominations, as well as members of the Baha'i Faith and adherents of Islam. There are no reports of atheists. This distribution of church members is reflected throughout the population, but individual villages, particularly small ones, may have only one or two of the major churches represented.

There are no sizable foreign national or immigrant groups, with the exception of U.S. citizens, most of whom are American Samoans. Members of this group practice the same faiths as native-born (Western) Samoans.

There is little or no correlation between religious differences and ethnic or political differences. Religious groups are comprised of citizens of any social and economic status.

Foreign missionary groups include the Baha'i Faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Roman Catholics.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion along with freedom of thought and conscience, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The

Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution provides the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government observes and enforces these provisions. The Constitution also provides for the protection of the right of religious freedom and effective remedies for violation of that right. Judicial remedies are accessible and effective.

The preamble to the Constitution acknowledges "an independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and traditions." Nevertheless, while Christianity is constitutionally favored, there is no official or state religion. There are no religious holidays, aside from Christmas, that are considered national holidays.

There are no requirements for the recognition of a religious group or for licenses or registration.

The Constitution provides freedom from unwanted religious indoctrination in schools but gives each denomination or religion the right to establish its own schools; these provisions are adhered to in practice. There are both religious and public schools; the public schools do not have religious instruction as part of their curriculum.

Pastoral schools in most villages provide religious instruction.

There is an independent Christian radio and television station.

Missionaries operate freely, either as part of one of the established churches, or by conducting independent revival meetings.

The Government takes steps to promote interfaith understanding by rotating ministers from various denominations who assist at government functions. Most government functions include a prayer at the opening.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

Although the Constitution grants each person the right to change religion or belief and to worship or teach religion alone or with others, in practice the matai (village chiefs) often choose the religious denomination of the aiga (extended family). In previous years, despite constitutional protections, village councils—in the name of maintaining social harmony within the village—sometimes banished or punished families that did not adhere to the prevailing religious belief in the village. However, civil courts take precedence over village councils, and courts have ordered families readmitted to the village. The 1990 Village Fono Act gives legal recognition to the decisions of the fono (village courts) and provides for limited recourse of appeal to the Lands and Titles Courts and to the Supreme Court. In July 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the Village Fono Act may not be used to infringe upon villagers' freedom of religion, speech, assembly, or association. The Supreme Court also ordered the reinstatement of 32 persons who had been banished from a village for practicing a religion other than that traditionally practiced in the village. The plaintiffs had complained that the village matai in Saipipi village had prohibited them from conducting Bible classes or church services on the village's communal land and limited the number of churches allowed in the village.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

There is strong societal pressure at the village and local level to attend church, participate in church services and activities, and support church leaders and projects financially. In some denominations, such financial contributions often total more than 30 percent of family income. A high percentage of the population attends church weekly.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SINGAPORE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in some circumstances.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government has banned Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. The Government does not tolerate speech or actions that could affect racial harmony.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 254 square miles and a total population of 4 million, of whom 3.3 million are citizens or permanent residents. According to an official survey, 85 percent of citizens and permanent residents profess some religious faith or belief. Of this group, slightly more than one-half (51 percent) practice Buddhism, Taoism, ancestor worship, or other faiths traditionally associated with the ethnic Chinese. Approximately 15 percent of the population are Muslim, 15 percent are Christian, and 4 percent are Hindu. The remainder are agnostics or atheists. Among Christians, the majority of whom are Chinese, Protestants outnumber Roman Catholics by slightly more than two to one. There are also small Sikh, Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Jain communities.

Approximately 77 percent of the population are Chinese, 14 percent are ethnic Malay, and 8 percent are ethnic Indian.

Virtually all ethnic Malays are Muslim and most Indians are Hindu. The ethnic Chinese population is divided among Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity, or are agnostic or atheist.

Foreign missionaries are active in the country and include Catholics, Mormons, and Baptists.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in some circumstances. The Constitution provides that every citizen or person in the country has a constitutional right to profess, practice, or propagate his religious belief so long as such activities do not breach any other laws relating to public order, public health, or morality. There is no state religion.

All religious groups are subject to government scrutiny and must be registered legally under the Societies Act. The Government deregistered the Singapore Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1972 and the Unification Church in 1982, making them unlawful societies.

The Government plays an active but limited role in religious affairs. For example the Government seeks to assure that citizens, the great majority of whom live in publicly subsidized housing, have ready access to religious organizations traditionally associated with their ethnic groups by assisting religious institutions to find space in these public complexes. The Government maintains a semiofficial relationship with the Muslim community through the Islamic Religious Council (MUIS) set up under the Administration of Muslim Law Act. The MUIS advises the Government on concerns of the Muslim community and has some regulatory functions over Muslim religious matters. The Government provides some financial assistance to build and maintain mosques.

The Constitution acknowledges ethnic Malays as "the indigenous people of Singapore" and charges the Government to support and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social, cultural, and language interests.

The Presidential Council on Minority Rights examines all pending bills to ensure that they are not disadvantageous to a particular group. It also reports to the Government on matters affecting any racial or religious community and investigates complaints.

The Government does not promote interfaith understanding directly; however, it sponsors activities to promote interethnic harmony, and, since the primary ethnic minorities are predominantly of one faith the Government programs to promote ethnic harmony have implications for interfaith relations.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government restricts certain religions by application of the Societies Act; it has banned Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. In 1982 the Minister for Home Affairs dissolved the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, also known as the Unification Church. In 1972 the Government deregistered and banned the Singapore Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses on the grounds that its roughly 2,000 members refuse to perform military service (which is obligatory for all male citizens), salute the flag, or swear oaths of allegiance to the State. Although the Court of Appeals in 1996 upheld the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses to profess, practice, and propagate their religious belief, the result of deregistration has been to make meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses illegal. The Government also has banned all written materials published by the International Bible Students Association and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, both publishing arms of Jehovah's Witnesses. In practice this has led to confiscation of Bibles published by the group, even though the Bible itself has not been outlawed.

There are 26 Jehovah's Witnesses incarcerated in the Armed Forces Detention Barracks because of their refusal to serve in the Armed Forces. The Government regards such refusal as prejudicial to public welfare and order. Sentences are initially 15 months, to which 24 months is added upon a second refusal. Subsequent failures to perform required annual military reserve duty receive 40-day sentences; a 12-month sentence is usual after four such refusals.

Since the beginning of 2000, public secondary schools have indefinitely suspended 12 students who were members of Jehovah's Witnesses for refusing to sing the national anthem or participate in the flag ceremony. In April 2001, one public school teacher, also a member of Jehovah's Witnesses, resigned after being threatened with dismissal for refusing to participate in singing the national anthem. In 1998 another member of Jehovah's Witness lost a law suit against a government school for wrongful dismissal because he also refused to sing the national anthem or salute the flag. In March 1999, the Court of Appeals denied his appeal.

The 1990 Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, which was prompted by actions that the Government perceived as threats to religious harmony, including aggressive and "insensitive" proselytizing and "the mixing of religion and politics," gives the Government the power to restrain leaders and members of religious groups and institutions from carrying out political activities, "exciting disaffection against" the Government, creating "ill-will" between religious groups or carrying out subversive activities. The act also prohibits judicial review of its enforcement or of any possible denial of rights arising from it.

The Government does not tolerate speech or actions, including ostensibly religious speech or action, that affect racial and religious harmony and sometimes issues restraining orders barring persons from taking part in such activities.

The Presidential Council on Religious Harmony reports to the Minister for Home Affairs on matters affecting the maintenance of religious harmony that are referred to the Council by the Minister or by Parliament. The Council also considers and makes recommendations to the Minister on restraining orders referred to the Council by the Minister. Such orders are directed at individuals to restrain them from causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will, or hostility between among various religious groups or to restrain them from mixing religion with politics. The orders put individuals on notice that they should not repeat such acts, and advise them that failure to do so would result in prosecution in a court of law.

On December 31, 2000, police arrested and later charged 15 Falun Gong adherents for conducting protest without a permit; only 2 of those arrested were citizens. The 15 persons arrested had participated in an assembly of 60 Falun Gong members who sought to draw attention to the arrest and killing of Falun Gong members in China. The group had not sought a permit, asserting that police had not responded to their previous efforts to obtain permits.

In October 2000, the Government refused to grant a public entertainment license for a controversial play that depicted marital violence experienced by Indian Muslim women after the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore strongly objected to the play's content. The government rejected the application on the grounds that the play might inflame religious and ethnic passions.

Missionaries, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses and representatives of the Unification Church, are permitted to work and to publish and distribute religious texts. However, while the Government does not prohibit evangelical activities in practice, it discourages activities that might upset the balance of intercommunal relations.

In October 1999, the Government proposed compulsory education for all children, which prompted concern from the Malay/Muslim community on the fate of madrasahs (Islamic religious schools). In response the Government exempted

madrasah students from compulsory attendance in national schools when the legislation was enacted in October 2000. However, madrasahs were given 8 years from the time that the law goes into effect to achieve minimum academic standards or they will no longer be allowed to teach core secular subjects such as science, mathematics, and English. The date the law goes into effect had not yet been decided by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Women's Charter, enacted in 1961, gives women, among other rights, the right to own property, conduct trade, and receive divorce settlements. Muslim women enjoy most of the rights and protections of the Women's Charter; however, for the most part, Muslim marriage law falls under the administration of the Muslim Law Act, which empowers the Shari'a court to oversee such matters. Those laws allow Muslim men to practice polygyny.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Authorities briefly detained and questioned a man in 2000 and three others in 2001 for possession of banned religious material; none were charged with an offense.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious communities in society generally are amicable. Virtually all ethnic Malay citizens are Muslim, and ethnic Malays constitute the great majority of the country's Muslim community. Attitudes held by non-Malays on the Malay community and by Malays on the non-Malay community are based on both ethnicity and religion, and are virtually impossible to separate.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 11,599 square miles, and its population is 450,000. Most citizens are members of Christian churches. The Anglican, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Methodist, and Seventh-Day Adventist denominations are represented. Traditional indigenous religious believers, consisting primarily of the Kwaio community on the island of Malaita, account for approximately 5 percent. Other groups, such as the Baha'i Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and indigenous churches that have broken away from traditional Christian churches, account for another 2 percent. There are believed to be members of additional world religions within the foreign community who are free to practice their religion, but they are not known to proselytize or hold public religious ceremonies. According to the most recent census figures there are only six Muslims in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The Department of Home and Cultural Affairs has a nominal policymaking role concerning religion. It characterizes this role, on the one hand, as keeping a balance between constitutionally protected rights of religious freedom, free speech, and expression; and, on the other hand, maintenance of public order. All religious institutions are required to register with the Government; however, there is no evidence that registration has been denied to any group.

In general the Government does not subsidize religion. However, several schools and health services in the country were built by and continue to be operated by religious organizations. There are schools sponsored by Roman Catholics, the Church of Melanesia, the United Church (Methodist), the South Sea Evangelical Church, and Seventh-Day Adventists. Upon independence the Government recognized that it had neither the funds nor the personnel to take over these institutions and agreed to subsidize their operations. The Government also pays the salaries of most teachers and health staff in the national education system.

The public school curriculum includes 30 minutes daily of religious instruction, the content of which is agreed upon by the Christian churches; students whose parents do not wish them to attend the class are excused. However, the Government does not subsidize church schools that do not align their curriculums with governmental criteria. There is mutual understanding between the Government and the churches but no formal memorandum of understanding. Although theoretically non-Christian religions can be taught in the schools, there is no such instruction at present.

Christianity was brought to the country in the 19th and early 20th centuries by missionaries representing several Western churches: Anglican; Roman Catholic; South Seas Evangelical; Seventh-Day Adventist; and the London Missionary Society (which became the United Church). Some foreign missionaries continue to work in the country. However, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, whose clergy is about 50 percent indigenous, the clergy of the other traditional churches is nearly entirely indigenous. Traditional church missionaries are represented by religions such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, the United Church (Methodist), the South Sea Evangelical Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities. Customarily, government oaths of office are taken on the Bible; however, religious oaths are forbidden by the Constitution and cannot be required.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. Joint religious activities, such as religious representation at national events, are organized through the Solomon Islands Christian Association, which is composed of the five traditional churches of the country. Occasionally individual citizens object to the activities of nontraditional denominations and suggest that they be curtailed. However, society in general is tolerant of different religious beliefs and activities.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

THAILAND

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it does not register new religious groups that have not been accepted into one of the existing religious governing bodies on doctrinal or other grounds. The Government places some limits on foreign missionaries.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 190,000 square miles and its population is approximately 60 million. In a 1997 survey, over 99 percent of the population professed some religious belief or faith. According to government statistics, approximately 94 percent of the population are Buddhist, and 5 percent are Muslim; however, recent estimates by academics and religious groups state that approximately 85 to 90 percent of the population are Theravada Buddhist, and up to 10 percent of the population are Muslim. Estimates also indicate that Christians constitute about 1 to 2 percent of the population. There are small animist, Hindu, Sikh, Taoist, Jewish, and Brahman populations. No official statistics exist as to the numbers of atheists or persons who do not profess a religious faith or belief, but recent surveys indicate that together they make up less than 1 percent of the population.

The dominant religion is Theravada Buddhism. The Buddhist clergy or Sangha consists of two main schools, which are governed by the same ecclesiastical hierarchy. Monks belonging to the older Mahanikaya school far outnumber those of the Dhammayuttika School, an order that grew out of a 19th century reform movement led by King Mongkut (Rama IV).

Islam is the dominant religion in four of the five southernmost provinces, which border Malaysia. Minority Muslim populations also live in 74 of the 76 provinces. The majority of Muslims are ethnic Malay, but the Muslim population encompasses groups of diverse ethnic and national origin, including descendants of immigrants from South Asia, China, Cambodia, and Indonesia. Government agencies did not use consistent figures to describe the size of the Muslim population during the period covered by this report, but most estimates suggest that Muslims constitute as much as 10 percent of the population. There are approximately 3,200 mosques in 57 provinces, with the largest number (552) in Pattani province. All but a very small number of these mosques are associated with the Sunni branch of Islam. The remainder, estimated by the Religious Affairs Department to be from 1 to 2 percent of the total, are associated with the Shi'a branch.

According to government statistics, Christians constitute approximately 0.7 percent (438,600) of the population. Almost half the Christian population lives in Chiang Mai province. The remainder live in the Bangkok area and in the north-eastern provinces. Approximately 25 percent of the Christian population is Roman Catholic. There are also several Protestant denominations. Most Protestant churches belong to one of four umbrella organizations. The oldest of these groupings, the Church of Christ in Thailand, was formed in the mid-1930's. The largest is the Evangelical Foundation of Thailand. Baptists and Seventh-Day Adventists are recognized by government authorities as separate Protestant denominations and are organized under similar umbrella groups.

There are six tribal groups (chao khao) recognized by the Government, with an estimated population from 500,000 to 600,000 persons, whose members generally are described as animists. Syncretistic practices drawn from Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and ethnic Tai spirit worship are common. The Hindu and Sikh communities have an estimated population of about 19,000 persons. Both are associated with small immigrant groups that arrived from South Asia during the twentieth century, although Brahman temples had been established in Bangkok as early as 1784. The majority of Hindus and Sikhs live in Chonburi, Bangkok, and Phuket provinces.

The ethnic Chinese minority (Sino-Thai) has retained some popular religious traditions from China, including adherence to popular Taoist beliefs. Members of the Mien hill tribe follow a form of Taoism.

Mahayana Buddhism is practiced primarily by small groups of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants. There are more than 650 Chinese and Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist shrines and temples throughout the country.

Citizens proselytize freely. Monks working as Buddhist missionaries (Dhammaduta) have been active since the end of World War II, particularly in border areas among the country's tribal populations. In April 2001, there were approximately 3,100 Dhammaduta working in the country. In addition the Government sponsored the international travel of another 884 Buddhist monks sent by their temples to disseminate religious information abroad. Christian and Muslim organizations also reported having smaller numbers of citizens working as missionaries in Thailand and abroad.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it restricts the activities of some groups. The Constitution requires that the monarch be a Buddhist. The state religion is in effect Theravada Buddhism; however, it is not designated as such. When the Constitution was being drafted in 1997, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly rejected a proposal to have Theravada Buddhism named the official religion on the grounds that such an action would create social division and be "offensive" to other religious communities in the country.

The Constitution states that discrimination against a person on the grounds of "a difference in religious belief" shall not be permitted. There was no significant pattern of religious discrimination during the period covered by this report. The Government maintained longstanding policies designed to integrate Muslim communities into society through developmental efforts and expanded educational opportunities, as well as policies designed to increase the number of appointments to local and provincial positions where Muslims traditionally have been underrepresented.

The Government plays an active role in religious affairs. The Religious Affairs Department (RAD), which is located in the Ministry of Education, registers religious organizations. In order to be registered, a religious organization first must be accepted into an officially recognized ecclesiastical group. During the period covered by this report, there were seven such groups, including one for the Buddhist community, one for the Muslim community, one for the Catholic community, and four for Protestant denominations. Government registration confers some benefits, including access to state subsidies, tax-exempt status, and preferential allocation of resident visas for organization officials. In practice unregistered religious organizations operate freely.

Under the provisions of the Religious Organizations Act of 1969, the Department of Religious Affairs recognizes a new religion if a national census shows that it has at least 5,000 adherents, has a uniquely recognizable theology, and is not politically active. However, since 1984 the Government has maintained a policy of not recognizing any new religious faiths. This has restricted the activities of some groups that have not been accepted into one of the existing religious governing bodies on doctrinal or other grounds.

The Constitution requires the Government "to patronize and protect Buddhism and other religions." The State subsidizes the activities of the three largest religious communities (Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian). During the period covered by this report, the Government provided approximately the equivalent of \$47 million to support religious groups. Included in this amount are funds: To support Buddhist and Muslim institutes of higher education; to fund religious education programs in public and private schools; to provide daily allowances for monks and Muslim clerics who hold administrative and senior ecclesiastical posts; and to subsidize travel and health care for monks and Muslim clerics. This figure also includes an annual budget for the renovation and repair of Buddhist temples and Muslim mosques, the maintenance of historic Buddhist sites, and the daily upkeep of the Central Mosque in Pattani.

During the period covered by this report, the Government also provided \$66,000 (3 million baht) to Christian organizations to support social welfare projects. Catholic and Protestant churches can request government support for renovation and repair work but do not receive a regular budget to maintain church buildings nor do they receive government assistance to support their clergy. The Government considers donations made to maintain Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian buildings to be tax-free income; contributions for these purposes are also tax-deductible for private donors.

The Government actively sponsors interfaith dialog in accordance with the Constitution, which requires the State to "promote good understanding and harmony among followers of all religions." The Government funds regular meetings and public education programs. These programs included the Religious Affairs Department

annual interfaith meeting for representatives of all religious groups certified by RAD. The September 2000 meeting in Bangkok drew 400 participants. They also included monthly meetings of the 17-member Subcommittee on Religious Relations, located within the Prime Minister's National Identity Promotion Office (The Subcommittee is composed of one representative from the Buddhist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Hindu, and Sikh communities in addition to civil servants from several government agencies), and a 1-week education program coorganized by the National Identity Promotion Office and the National Council on Social Welfare. The latter event is held each December in celebration of the King's birthday. Representatives from every religious organization recognized by the RAD are invited to attend seminars associated with the event. The program also targets the general public through films and public displays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Two branches of the Government investigated religious groups alleged to be engaged in cult activities prior to the period covered by this report. In 1998 the National Security Council and the House Standing Committee on Religion, Arts, and Cultural Affairs initiated an investigation into the alleged "cultish practices" of the Hope of Thai People Foundation after complaints were filed at the Religious Affairs Department by parents claiming that their children had isolated themselves from friends and family after joining the church. In January 1999, the House Standing Committee moved to consider a petition filed by a Senator requesting that the foundation's activities be investigated. In response the foundation filed a law suit against the committee chairman for defamation in May 1999. The law suit against the former chairman, now a senator, remained in litigation at the end of the period covered by this report. No further action was taken before the committee disbanded at the end of the parliamentary session.

In February 2001, Thai Falun Gong members voluntarily decided not to proceed with plans organize an international meeting in Bangkok, proposed for April 2001. Their decision was in part a response to unofficial indications from the Government that it did not favor such a conference. There were reports that the government of China had exerted significant economic pressure on the Government in connection with this issue.

The Government does not recognize new religious faiths outside of the seven existing groupings. However, unregistered religious organizations operate freely. The Government has not recognized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

The Government permitted foreign missionary groups to work freely throughout the country, although it also maintained policies that favored proselytizing by its citizens.

The number of foreign missionaries officially registered with the Government is limited to a quota that originally was established by the Religious Affairs Department in 1982. The quota is divided along both religious and denominational lines and is considered sensitive for this reason. The Government does not publish or release its quotas for particular religious denominations. In May 2001, there reportedly were 2,000 foreign missionaries legally registered, including 418 Roman Catholic, 996 Protestant, 150 Mormon, and 6 Muslim missionaries.

While official registration conferred some benefits, such as longer terms for visa stays, it was not a significant barrier to foreign missionary activity during the period covered by this report. Many foreign missionaries entered the country using tourist visas and proselytized or disseminated religious literature without the acknowledgment of the Religious Affairs Department. There were no reports that foreign missionaries were deported or harassed for working without registration, although the activities of Muslim professors and clerics were subjected disproportionately to scrutiny on national security grounds because of continued government concern about the potential resurgence of Muslim separatist activities in the south.

Religious instruction is required in public schools at both the primary (grades 1 through 6) and secondary (grades 7 through 12) education levels. Students at the primary level are required to take 80 hours of instruction per academic year in religious studies classes. Instruction is limited to Buddhism and Islam. During the period covered by this report, some parts of the country with large Muslim student populations did not have Muslim studies courses. Muslim students in these schools generally were directed to school libraries to participate in Muslim self-study courses.

The Constitution provides for, and citizens generally enjoy, a large measure of freedom of speech. However, laws prohibiting speech likely to insult Buddhism remain in place under the 1997 Constitution. The police, who have legal authority under the Printing and Advertisement Act of 1941 to issue written warnings or or-

ders suspending the publication or distribution of printed materials considered offensive to public morals, confiscated a book in December 1999, written by a Phra Dhammakaya temple follower, that attacked a monk who is one of the chief critics of that temple. In December 1999, the police issued an arrest warrant for the author for defamation of character. As of June 2001, no arrest had been made in the case.

National Identity Cards produced by the Ministry of Interior since April 12, 1999 include an optional designation of the religious affiliation of the holder for the first time. The 1999 change in policy was implemented in response to the demands of parliamentarians who wanted easier identification of persons requiring Muslim burial. Persons who fail or choose not to indicate religious affiliation in their applications can be issued cards without religious information.

Muslim female civil servants are not permitted to wear headscarves when dressed in civil servant uniforms.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The case of a March 1999 attack in Nonthaburi province was closed due to lack of evidence in May 2001.

None of the religious communities led "ecumenical" movements.

Religious groups closely associated with ethnic minorities, such as Muslims, experience some societal economic discrimination.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

TONGA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 277 square miles and its population is 102,321. According to the last official census (1996), membership by percentage of population of major denominations is: Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, 41.3 percent; Roman Catholic, 16 percent; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), 14 percent; Free Church of Tonga, 12 percent; others, 17 percent. However, both Roman Catholics and the Mormon Church state that between 30 to 40 percent of all citizens are members of their faiths. Members of the Tokaikolo Church (a local offshoot of the Methodist Church), Seventh-Day Adventists, Assembly of God, Anglicans, the Baha'i Faith, Islam, and Hinduism are represented in much smaller numbers. There were no reports of atheists.

Western missionaries, particularly members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and other Christian Denominations, are active in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this

right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

All religious groups are permitted duty-free entry of goods intended for religious purposes, but no religious group is subsidized or granted tax-exempt status. Missionaries operate without special restrictions. There are a number of schools operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and by the Wesleyan Church.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Constitution states that Sunday, the Sabbath day, is to be “kept holy” and that no business can be conducted “except according to law.” Although an exception is made for hotels and resorts that are part of the tourism industry, the Sabbath day business prohibition is strictly enforced strictly for all businesses, regardless of the business owners’ religions.

The Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC) maintains policy guidelines regarding the broadcast of religious programming on Radio Tonga. The TBC guidelines state that in view of “the character of the listening public,” those who preach on Radio Tonga must confine their preaching “within the limits of the mainstream Christian tradition.” Due to this policy, the TBC does not allow members of the Baha’i Faith to discuss the tenets of their religion, or the founder, Baha’ullah, by name. Similarly, the TBC does not allow the Mormon Church to discuss its founder, Joseph Smith, or the Book of Mormon by name. This policy applies to all churches. Mormons utilize Radio Tonga for the announcement of church activities and functions. Other faiths also utilize Radio Tonga. Members of the Baha’i Faith utilize a privately owned radio station for program activities and the announcement of functions. A government-owned newspaper occasionally carries news articles about Baha’i activities or events, as well as those of other faiths.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident Embassy in Tonga; the U.S. Ambassador in Suva, Fiji is also accredited to the Government in Naku’alofa. The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Officials from the U.S. Embassy in Fiji meet with religious officials and nongovernmental organizations during visits to the country.

TUVALU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is composed of nine island groups with a total land area of approximately 10 square miles and its population is 10,838. The Church of Tuvalu, which has historic ties to Congregational and other churches in Samoa, has the largest number of followers. There are no specific or official figures on religious membership; however, but Tuvaluan officials and others estimate membership as follows: Church of Tuvalu, 91 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists, 3 percent; Baha’i, 3 percent;

Jehovah's Witness, 2 percent; and Catholic, 1 percent. There are also smaller numbers of Muslims, Baptists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and a few atheists.

All nine island groups have traditional chiefs who are members of the Church of Tuvalu. Most followers of other religions or denominations are found in Funafuti, the capital. An exception to this is the relatively large proportion of followers of the Baha'i Faith on Nanumea island.

There are a number of active Christian missionary organizations representing some of the same religious faiths practiced in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion, and the Constitution provides for separation of church and state. However, in practice government functions at the national and island council levels, such as the opening of Parliament and other official and ceremonial events, often include Christian prayers, clergy, or perspectives.

Missionaries practice without specific restrictions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

During the period covered by this report, the country's radio station was sold to a private owner who charges all churches for radio broadcasting time except for daily morning devotion. The Church of Tuvalu, the largest and most popular church, continues to conduct the morning devotion program.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Interfaith relations generally are amicable, but reportedly there is a degree of social intolerance for non-Church of Tuvalu activities, particularly on some outer islands. Members of the Church of Tuvalu dominate most aspects of social and political life in Tuvalu, given that they comprise over 90 percent of the population.

There are no ecumenical movements.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident Embassy in Tuvalu; the U.S. Ambassador in Suva, Fiji is also accredited to the Government in Funafuti. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Fiji visit periodically to discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officials also meet with representatives of the religious communities and nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in religious freedom. The U.S. Embassy actively supports efforts to improve and expand governmental and societal awareness of and protection for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion.

VANUATU

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

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

Although traditions of communal decisionmaking sometimes conflict with the introduction of new churches in rural communities, government officials use modern law and traditional authority to maintain amicable relations among established and new churches. Both government policy and the strength of traditional authority figures contribute to the religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an island nation, covering approximately 4,707 square miles; its population is approximately 183,000. The great majority of the population belong to Christian churches, although many combine their Christian faith with some pre-Christian cultural practices. Church membership is primarily Presbyterian (approximately 48 percent), Roman Catholic (15 percent), and Anglican (12 percent). Another 30 percent are members of the Church of Christ, the Apostolic Church, the Assemblies of God, or the Seventh-Day Adventists. The John Frum Movement is centered on the island of Tanna and includes less than 5 percent of the population. Muslims, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) reportedly also are active. There are believed to be members of other religions within the foreign community who are free to practice their religions, but they are not known to proselytize or hold public religious ceremonies.

Missionaries representing several Western churches brought Christianity to the country in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some foreign missionaries continue this work; however, the clergy of the established churches is now primarily indigenous. Missionaries represent the Church of Christ, Presbyterians, Seventh-Day Adventists, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics. Current missionary activity includes the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which translates the New Testament into indigenous languages.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The preamble of the Constitution refers to a commitment to traditional values and Christian principles; however, the Constitution also provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

In 1995 in response to concerns expressed by some established churches about the activities of new missionary groups, such as the Holiness Fellowship, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Parliament passed the Religious Bodies Act. However, the President never signed the act, and it never has been enforced. A few churches registered with the Government voluntarily, while some church representatives believe that it had a chilling effect on new missionary activity.

The Government interacts with churches through the Department of Internal Affairs and the Vanuatu Christian Council. Customarily, government oaths of office are taken on the Bible. The Government provides some financial help for the construction of churches for council members, provides grants to church-operated schools, and pays the national teaching staffs. These benefits are not available to non-Christian religious organizations. Government schools also schedule time each week for religious education conducted by representatives of council churches, using materials designed by those churches. Students whose parents do not wish them to attend the class are excused. Non-Christian religions are not permitted to teach their religions in the public schools.

Aside from the activities of the Department of Internal Affairs, use of government resources to support religious activities is not condoned (although there is no specific law prohibiting such support). If a formal request is given to the Government and permission is granted, governmental resources may be used. The Ombudsman's Office investigated the Minister of Health for allegedly using his office and stationery to solicit contributions for the John Frum Movement, a political party that is an indigenous religious movement on the island of Tanna.

The Government does not attempt to control missionary activity.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities; however, some churches and individuals object to the missionary activities of nontraditional denominations and continue to suggest that they be curtailed. There continues to be pressure to reinstate controls.

Religious representation at national events is organized through the Vanuatu Christian Council. Ecumenical activities of the council are limited to the interaction of its members.

In rural areas, traditional Melanesian communal decisionmaking predominates. If a member of the community wants to start something new, such as a new church, the chief and the rest of the community must agree. If a new church is started without community approval, the community views this action as a gesture of defiance by those who join the new church and as a threat to community solidarity. However, the resulting turmoil so far has been resolved through appeals from traditional leaders to uphold individual rights.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting of human rights.

VIETNAM

Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of worship; however, the Government continued to restrict those organized activities of religious groups that it declared to be at variance with state laws and policies. The Government generally allowed individual worship for those persons who participated privately in recognized religious bodies, including the Buddhist and Roman Catholic traditions. Participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly; however, the Government maintained organizational control of the administration of recognized religions, and restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of most religious groups remained in place. The Government controlled the administrative process leading to the creation of the official organizations for the major sanctioned religions, including the naming of their officers. In some cases, most notably the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Buddhist religions, some former leaders of the nonofficial pre-1975 organizations and many believers reject the official organizations.

Overall, the status of respect for religious freedom did not change during the period covered by this report, but remains improved from conditions of the early 1990's. The Government used the lack of official recognition of groups to restrict them; certain groups of Buddhists, Protestants, and Hoa Hao lack legal recognition. Restrictions remained on unrecognized religions and dissident religious leaders and groups. These restrictions were particularly harsh in some border provinces, although religious practice and observance became easier for believers in other parts of the country. In April 2001, the Government officially recognized the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam and allowed the group to elect its own leaders democratically. However, in February 2001, in the Central Highlands provinces of Gia Lai and Dak Lak the government took action against Protestant ethnic minorities protesting in part against the loss of traditional homelands to recent migrants—mostly ethnic Vietnamese—and abusive police treatment in the provinces. The authorities detained several Protestant leaders, and security forces harassed some local Christians, especially those suspected of advocating political autonomy for the region. The Government continued to permit only intermittent, supervised access to these provinces by diplomats, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), and other foreigners, making it difficult to verify conditions there.

Police routinely questioned persons who advocate dissident religious views and arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practices. Groups of Protestant Christians who worshipped in house churches in ethnic minority areas were subjected to detention by local officials who broke up unsanctioned religious meetings. Authorities also imprisoned persons for practicing religion illegally by using provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years for "abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion." There are an estimated two dozen religious prisoners and detainees.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society led to some modest attempts at cooperation and dialog in the southern part of the country.

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City maintained an active and regular dialog with senior- and working-level government officials to advocate greater religious freedom. The U.S. Ambassador and other U.S. officials discussed concerns about the detention and arrest of religious figures and other restrictions on religious freedom with cabinet ministers, Communist Party officials, and provincial officials. Intervention by the U.S. Government during the period covered by this report resulted in improvements, such as the release of at least five religious prisoners and detainees, a more open dialog on Cao Dai, and the recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 122,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 80 million. The Government officially recognizes Buddhist (approximately 50 percent of the population), Roman Catholic (approximately 8 percent), Cao Dai (1.5 percent), Hoa Hao (1.5 percent), Protestant (0.9 percent), and Muslim (0.1 percent) religious organizations. Approximately 38 percent of citizens consider themselves nonreligious.

Among the country's religious communities, Buddhism is the dominant religious belief. Many Buddhists practice an amalgam of Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucian traditions that sometimes is called Vietnam's "triple religion." Some estimates suggest that more than half the population is at least nominally Buddhist, visit pagodas on festival days, and have a world view that is shaped in part by Buddhism, although in reality these beliefs rely on a very expansive definition of the faith. One prominent Buddhist official has estimated that 30 percent of Buddhists are devout and practice their faith regularly. The Government's Office of Religious Affairs uses a much lower estimate of 7 million practicing Buddhists. Mahayana Buddhists, most of whom are part of the ethnic Kinh majority, are found throughout the country, especially in the populous areas of the northern and southern delta regions. There are fewer Buddhists proportionately in certain highland areas, although migration of Kinh to highland areas is changing the distribution somewhat. Mahayana Buddhist monks in the country occasionally have engaged in political and social issues, most notably actively campaigning for peace and against perceived injustices in the former Republic of Vietnam during the 1960's.

A Khmer ethnic minority in the south practices Theravada Buddhism. Numbering just over 1 million persons, they live almost exclusively in the Mekong Delta.

There are an estimated 6 million Roman Catholics in the country (approximately 8 percent of the population). French missionaries introduced the religion in the 17th century. In the 1940's, priests in the large Catholic dioceses of Phat Diem and Bui Chu, to the southeast of Hanoi, organized a political association with a militia that fought against the Communist guerrillas until the military defeat in 1954. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics from the northern part of the country fled to Ho Chi Minh City (then called Saigon) and surrounding areas ahead of the 1954 partition of North and South. Catholics live throughout the country, but the largest concentrations remain in the southern provinces around Ho Chi Minh City and in the provinces just southeast of Hanoi. Catholicism has revived in northern regions. In recent years, congregations in the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong and many nearby provinces have rebuilt churches and reinstated religious services.

In the past several years, diplomatic missions from the Vatican have resulted in the filling of bishoprics that had been vacant for a number of years. In June 2000, a bishop was named for Da Nang province, and in August 2000, a bishop was named for Vinh Long province. During a Vatican delegation's visit in June 2001, the Government reportedly agreed to the Vatican's appointment of three additional bishops: A new bishop for Bui Chu Diocese; an auxiliary bishop for Ho Chi Minh City; and a coadjutor bishop for Phan Thiet. However, the Government also reportedly refused to allow appointment of a bishop for the Hung Hoa Diocese, a coadjutor bishop for Hanoi, and a bishop for Haiphong. The head of the Vatican delegation stated that the atmosphere in the meetings was warmer than on any of his six earlier visits. Government officials stated that they "view the Catholic Church as a positive force."

There are at least 700,000 Protestants in the country (less than 1 percent of the population), with more than half of these persons belonging to a large number of unregistered evangelical "house churches" that operate in members' homes or in rural villages, many of them in ethnic minority areas. Perhaps as many as 150,000 of the followers of house churches are Pentecostals, who celebrate "gifts of the spirit" through charismatic and ecstatic rites of worship. Protestantism in the country dates from 1911, when an American missionary from the Christian and Missionary Alliance arrived in Da Nang. Reports from believers indicated that Protestant

church attendance grew during the period covered by this report, especially among the house churches, despite continued government restrictions on proselytizing activities. Based on believers' estimates, two-thirds of Protestants are members of ethnic minorities, including ethnic Hmong (an estimated 150,000 followers) in the northwest provinces and some 200,000 members of ethnic minority groups of the Central Highlands (Ede, Jarai, Bahnar, and Koho, among others). The house churches in ethnic minority areas have been growing rapidly, sparked in part by radio broadcasts in ethnic minority languages from the Philippines.

The Cao Dai religion was founded in 1926 in the south. The Office of Religious Affairs estimates there are 1.1 million Cao Dai. Some NGO sources estimate that there are from 2 to 3 million followers. Cao Dai groups are most active in Tay Ninh Province, where the Cao Dai Holy See is located, and in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta. There are separate groups within the Cao Dai religion, which is syncretistic, combining elements of many faiths. Its basic belief system is influenced strongly by Mahayana Buddhism, although it recognizes a diverse array of persons who have conveyed divine revelation, including Siddhartha, Jesus, Lao-Tse, Confucius, and Moses. During the 1940's and 1950's, the Cao Dai participated in political and military activities. Their opposition to the Communist forces until 1975 was a factor in government repression after 1975. The Cao Dai were granted legal recognition only in 1997. Some adherents claim that it became more broadly based in 2000.

Hoa Hao, considered by some of its followers to be a "reform" branch of Buddhism, was founded in the southern part of the country in 1939. Hoa Hao is a largely privatistic faith that does not have a priesthood and rejects many of the ceremonial aspects of mainstream Buddhism. According to the Office of Religious Affairs, there are 1.3 million Hoa Hao followers; church-affiliated expatriate groups estimate that there may be from 2 million to 3 million followers. Hoa Hao followers are concentrated in the Mekong Delta, particularly in provinces such as An Giang, where the Hoa Hao were dominant as a political and military as well as a religious force before 1975. Elements of the Hoa Hao were among the last defenders to surrender to Communist forces in the Mekong Delta in the summer of 1975.

Mosques serving the country's small Muslim population, estimated at 60,000 persons, operate in western An Giang province, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and provinces in the southern part of the country. The Muslim community is composed of ethnic Cham in the southern coastal provinces and western Mekong Delta. The Muslim community also includes some ethnic Vietnamese and migrants originally from Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. Most practice Sunni Islam.

There are a variety of smaller religious communities. Approximately 4,000 Hindus live in Ho Chi Minh City; some are ethnic Cham, but most are Indian or of mixed Indian-Vietnamese descent. Another estimated 4,000 ethnic Chams reportedly practice forms of Hinduism on the south central coast area.

There are estimated to be from several hundred to 2,000 members of the Baha'i Faith, largely concentrated in the south; prior to 1975, there were an estimated 130,000 believers, according to Baha'i officials.

There are several hundred members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) who are spread throughout the country but live primarily in the Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi areas.

Of the country's approximately 80 million citizens, 14 million or more reportedly do not practice any organized religion. Some sources strictly define those considered to be practicing Buddhists, excluding those whose activities are limited to visiting pagodas on ceremonial holidays. Using this definition, the number of nonreligious persons would be much higher, perhaps as high as 50 million persons.

Foreign missionaries from various groups throughout the country engaged in developmental, humanitarian, educational, and relief efforts. None of these organizations legally are permitted to register or to proselytize.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of worship; however, the Government continued to restrict significantly those organized activities of religious groups that it declared to be at variance with state laws and policies. The Government generally allowed persons to practice individual worship freely in one of the major sanctioned religions, and participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly. However, the Government uses regulations to control religious hierarchies and organized religious activities closely, in part because in the past various religious bodies engaged in political and military activities and in part because the Communist Party believes that organized

religion may weaken its authority and its influence by serving as a political, social, and spiritual alternative to its own authority.

The secular Government does not favor a particular religion. The prominent traditional position of Buddhism does not affect religious freedom for others adversely, including those who wish not to practice a religion. The Constitution expressly protects the right of “non-belief” as well as “belief.”

The Government requires religious groups to register and uses this process to control and monitor religious organizations. Under the law, only those activities and organizations expressly sanctioned by the Government are deemed to be legal. In order for a group to obtain official recognition, it must obtain government approval of its leadership and the overall scope of its activities.

In February 2001, the Government organized a congress of Protestant delegates from the southern part of the country that led to the official recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam in April 2001. The Congress was notable for its election of officers, apparently free of government control. The newly recognized church is represented in all the southern provinces of the country; however, it is still unclear whether provincial officials will allow churches broad latitude to be represented by or to participate in the organization. The northern branch of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam, with some 15 officially approved churches in the northern part of the country, has been recognized for many years.

Officially recognized religious organizations are able to operate openly in most parts of the country, and followers of these religious bodies are able to worship without government harassment, except in some isolated provinces. Officially recognized organizations must consult with the Government about their religious and administrative operations, although not about their religious tenets of faith. While the Government does not directly appoint the leadership of the official religious organizations, to varying degrees it plays an influential role in shaping the process of selection and in some cases maintains a veto power. In general religious organizations are confined to dealing specifically with spiritual and with organizational matters. There has been a trend in the past several years to accord much greater latitude to followers of recognized religious organizations, and the majority of the country’s religious followers have benefited from this development. The Government holds conferences to discuss and publicize its religion decrees.

Religious organizations must obtain government permission to hold training seminars, conventions, and celebrations outside the regular religious calendar; to build or remodel places of worship; to engage in charitable activities or operate religious schools; and to train, ordain, promote, or transfer clergy. They also must obtain government permission for large mass gatherings, as do nonreligious groups. Many of these restrictive powers lie principally with provincial or city people’s committees, and local treatment of religious persons varied widely. Some provincial leaders, such as those in certain northwestern provinces, have claimed that there are no religious believers in their provinces since the religious believers there are not recognized officially.

Many Catholic churches in Ho Chi Minh City are allowed to provide religious education to children. Children also are taught religion at Khmer Buddhist pagodas and at mosques outside regular classroom hours.

Because of the lack of meaningful due process in the legal system, the actions of religious adherents are subject to the discretion of local officials in their respective jurisdictions. Because the court system is subservient to the Communist Party and its political decisions, and because persons are not charged specifically with religious offenses, there are no known cases in recent history in which the courts acted to interpret laws so as to protect a person’s right to religious freedom.

The degree of Government control of church activities varied greatly among localities. In some areas, especially in the south, Catholic churches operated kindergartens and engaged in a variety of humanitarian projects. Buddhist groups engage in humanitarian activities in many parts of the country.

The Office of Religious Affairs hosts periodic meetings to address religious matters according to government-approved agendas that bring together leaders of diverse religious traditions.

In practice there are no effective legal remedies for violations of religious freedom caused by the capricious actions of officials.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government continued to maintain broad legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom, although in many areas, Buddhists, Catholics, and Protestants reported an increase in religious activity and observance.

The Government restricts Protestant practice in the Central Highlands among the region’s ethnic minorities, particularly the Mnong, Ede, Jarai, and Bahnar, and re-

stricts Protestant congregations from cooperating on joint religious observances or other activities, although in some localities they were free to do so. There is some ecumenical networking among Protestants, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City. The Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECV), which comprises the network of Tin Lanh (Good News) churches, generally operated with greater freedom than did the so-called Protestant house churches. The roughly 300 Tin Lanh churches in the country are concentrated in the major cities, including Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Hanoi, and in lowland areas. Until 2001 approximately 15 ECV churches in the northern provinces were the only officially recognized Protestant churches. One of the pastors of the main ECV church in Hanoi continued to be pressured by local authorities to resign from the church; government authorities proposed that he be replaced by a church official from Haiphong who was supported by local authorities. The pastor received a letter from local police stating that he had violated the law because of his past support of unsanctioned religious activities; however, the pastor and the congregation continued to resist successfully this 2-year-old effort to force him to resign.

In April 2001, the Government conferred legal recognition on the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam. This body represents Protestant churches throughout the southern part of the country, with representatives from every southern province, including the Central Highlands, where many "house churches" operate. However, it is still unclear whether provincial officials will allow churches broad latitude to be represented by or to participate in the organization. Because of past government repression of Protestantism, particularly in the Central Highlands, some Protestant pastors in that area are suspicious of the Southern Evangelical Church and reportedly do not plan to seek affiliation with it. It is not known whether the Southern Evangelical Church is to be allowed, or would like, to have formal ties to the legally recognized Evangelical Church of Vietnam, based in Hanoi.

The Government continued to ban and actively discourage participation in what it regards as illegal religious groups, including the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), Protestant house churches, and the unapproved Hoa Hao groups. The withholding of official recognition of religious bodies is one of the means by which the Government actively intervenes to restrict religious activities by some believers. Religious and organizational activities by UBCV monks are illegal, and all UBCV activities outside private temple worship are proscribed. Most evangelical house churches do not attempt to register because they believe that their applications would be denied, or because they want to avoid government control.

The Hoa Hao have faced severe restrictions on their religious and political activities since 1975, in part because of their previous armed opposition to the Communist forces. After 1975 all administrative offices, places of worship, and social and cultural institutions connected to the faith were closed, thereby limiting public religious functions. Believers continued to practice their religion at home; however, the lack of access to public gathering places contributed to the Hoa Hao community's isolation and fragmentation. Nevertheless, in June 2000, an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 believers gathered for a religious festival in An Giang province.

The Government dissolved the Hoa Hao Buddhist church in 1975 and established a new official Hoa Hao body in 1999. The Government never dissolved the Cao Dai church but placed it under the control of the Fatherland Front in 1977. The Government banned several of its essential ceremonies because it considered them to be "superstitious," and it imprisoned and reportedly killed many Cao Dai clergy in the late 1970's. In 1997 the Government reorganized the religion and set up a new "Management Council" of cooperative Cao Dai priests who drew up a new constitution. In 1981 the Government organized a new umbrella organization of Buddhist sects, the Central Buddhist Church of Vietnam, which effectively annulled the former Buddhist organization, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). The Government imposed, through indirect means, its own leadership on these new organizations. The new government-established religious bodies excluded those leaders who did not cooperate with the Government and persons whom they believed to be anti-Communist. The excluded leaders and supporters of the pre-1975 organizations, both in the country and abroad, have continued to challenge the legitimacy of the new administrative bodies. Other leaders and individuals refused to accept the leadership of the government-established religious bodies on principle.

In February 2000, a group of Hoa Hao believers tried to revive their pre-1975 Hoa Hao group and established an association independent of the government-sanctioned body, the Hoa Hao Central Buddhist Church (HHCBC). Several leaders of the Hoa Hao community, including several pre-1975 leaders, openly criticized the Government's 1999 recognition of an official Hoa Hao organization; they claimed that the official group is subservient to the Government, and demanded official recognition of their own leadership instead. They petitioned the Government for official recogni-

tion, but the Government ignored their petition. Some of these persons then protested. The group's highest officers either were in prison or under house arrest at the end of the period covered by this report.

Provincial officials in Ha Giang and Lai Chau provinces in the north attempted to pressure Hmong Christians to recant their faith. Local and provincial officials in these areas circulated official documents urging persons to give up their illegal "foreign" religion and to practice traditional animist beliefs and ancestor worship. Regional and police newspapers printed articles documenting how persons were deceived into following the house church "cults."

The Government requires all Buddhist monks to work under the officially recognized Buddhist organization, the Central Buddhist Church of Vietnam. The Government continued to oppose efforts by the non-government-sanctioned UBCV to operate independently, and tension between the Government and the UBCV continued. Several prominent UBCV monks, including Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, continued to face Government restrictions on their civil liberties during the period covered by this report. Buddhist monks in Hue also continued to complain that petitions to local authorities for permission to repair or renovate pagodas go unanswered.

In October 2000, police in the Mekong Delta prevented a group of UBCV monks from distributing flood relief supplies that were labeled "UBCV," although in November 2000, police allowed these monks to distribute unlabeled aid packets. Hoa Hao leaders reported that they also were allowed to distribute unlabeled relief supplies during flooding in the Mekong Delta in 2000.

Operational and organizational restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of most religious groups remained in place. Religious groups faced difficulty in obtaining teaching materials, expanding training facilities, publishing religious materials, and expanding the number of clergy in religious training in response to increased demand from congregations. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, faces many restrictions on the training and ordination of priests, nuns, and bishops, thus limiting pastoral ministry. The Government effectively maintains veto power over Vatican appointments of bishops; however, in practice it has sought to cooperate with the Church in nominations for appointment. Likewise, the Government restricted the number of clergy that the Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, and Cao Dai Churches may train. Restrictions remained on the numbers of Buddhist monks and Catholic seminarians. Protestants and Cao Dai were not allowed to operate a seminary or to ordain new clergy. In addition worshipers in several Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, and Cao Dai centers of worship reported that they believed that undercover government observers attended worship services to monitor the activities of the congregation and the clergy.

The Cao Dai Management Council a government-controlled organization established in 1997, has the power to control all the affairs of the Cao Dai faith, and thereby manages the church's operations, its hierarchy, and its clergy within the country. Independent Cao Dai officials oppose the edicts of this committee as unfaithful to Cao Dai principles and traditions. When the committee rewrote the Cao Dai constitution in 1997, it banned certain traditional rituals that the Government deemed "superstitious," including the use of mediums to communicate with spirits. Because the use of mediums was essential to ceremonies accompanying promotion of clerics to higher ranks, the new Cao Dai constitution effectively banned clerical promotions. In December 1999, the Management Committee reached agreement with Cao Dai clergy that it would modify its rituals in a way that would be acceptable to the Government, but maintain enough spiritual direction to be acceptable to Cao Dai principles. As a result, a Congress was held in which several hundred Cao Dai clergy were promoted.

The local Catholic Church hierarchy remained frustrated by government restrictions but has learned to accommodate itself to them for many years. A number of clergy reported a modest easing of government control over church activities in certain dioceses, including in a few churches in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City that were allowed to offer English-language masses that only expatriates could attend. The Church was able to engage in religious education including the education of children and performing charitable activities in some geographic areas.

Roman Catholic seminaries throughout the country have approximately 500 students enrolled. The Government limits the Church to operating six major seminaries and to recruitment of new seminarians only every 2 years. All students must be approved by the Government both upon entering the seminary and prior to their ordination as priests. The Church believes that the number of students being ordained is insufficient to support the growing Catholic population.

The Muslim Association of Vietnam was banned in 1975 but authorized again in 1992. It is the only registered Muslim organization. Association leaders say that

they are able to practice their faith, including daily prayer, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the Hajj to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. From 30 to 40 Muslims journeyed to Mecca for the Hajj in 2001.

The constitutional right of freedom of belief and religion is interpreted and enforced unevenly. In some areas, such as parts of Ho Chi Minh City, local officials allow relatively wide latitude to believers; in others, such as isolated provinces of the northwest, Central Highlands, and central coast, religious believers are subject to significant harassment because of the lack of effective legal enforcement and the whim of local officials. Some religious groups that lacked registration were subjected to local government harassment. This was particularly true for Protestant and UBCV believers.

The Government prohibits proselytizing by foreign missionary groups. Some missionaries visited the country despite this prohibition and carried on informal proselytizing activities. The Government deported some foreign persons for unauthorized proselytizing, sometimes defining proselytizing very broadly. Proselytizing by citizens is restricted to regularly scheduled religious services in recognized places of worship. Immigrants and noncitizens must comply with the law when practicing their religions. In both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, there are Sunday morning Catholic masses conducted in English by local Vietnamese priests for the convenience of foreigners. In both cities, there also are well-publicized Protestant worship services for foreigners conducted by foreigners, some of whom are affiliated with religious NGO's, although the legal status of these services is unclear.

In April 1999, the Government issued a decree on religion that prescribes the rights and responsibilities of religious believers. The religion decree states that persons formerly detained or imprisoned must obtain special permission from the authorities before they may resume religious activities. Some persons previously detained were released and were active in their religious communities during the period covered by this report.

The decree also states that no religious organization can reclaim lands or properties taken over by the State following the end of the 1954 war against French rule and the 1975 Communist victory in the south. Despite this blanket prohibition, the Government has returned some church properties confiscated since 1975. The People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City returned two properties to the Catholic Church. On one of the properties, in Cu Chi District, the Church is constructing an HIV/AIDS hospice to be operated by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. The other property is now a church-operated orphanage. One of the vice-chairmen of the official Buddhist Sangha said that approximately 30 percent of Buddhist properties confiscated in Ho Chi Minh City have been returned since 1975, and from 5 to 10 percent of all Buddhist properties confiscated in the south have been returned. However, UBCV leaders stated that their properties were not returned. Likewise the former Protestant seminary in Nha Trang is used for secular purposes. Most Cao Dai and Hoa Hao properties also have not been returned, according to church leaders.

The Government restricts and monitors all forms of public assembly, including assembly for religious activities; however, on some occasions, large religious gatherings have been allowed, such as the Catholic celebrations at La Vang, and attendance at Buddhist festivals and pilgrimage sites increased dramatically in recent years. The Hoa Hao also have been allowed to hold large public gatherings in An Giang province on certain Hoa Hao festival days. On certain other traditional Hoa Hao commemorative days such as the anniversary of the death of the Hoa Hao founder, large gatherings are discouraged. In March 2000, dissident Hoa Hao leaders were prevented by arrest, police roadblock, and other forcible means from organizing their own independent commemorations. In March 2001, dissident leaders did not attempt to organize a large independent commemorations; however, several Hoa Hao followers were allowed to travel individually and in small groups to the traditional pilgrimage site to commemorate the anniversary peacefully.

The Government restricts persons who belong to dissident and unofficial religious groups from speaking publicly about their beliefs. It officially requires all religious publishing to be done by government-approved publishing houses. A range of Buddhist sacred scriptures, Bibles, and other religious texts and publications are printed by these organizations and are distributed openly. The government-sanctioned Hoa Hao Committee has printed 15,000 copies of publications of parts of the Hoa Hao sacred scriptures; however, Hoa Hao believers reported that the Government continued to restrict the distribution of the full scriptures.

The Government allows religious travel for some, but not all, religious persons; Muslims are able to undertake the Hajj, and many Buddhist and Catholic officials also have been able to travel abroad. For example, groups of Buddhist monks and nuns have traveled to Burma to study Theravada Buddhism. However, persons who

hold dissident religious opinions generally are not approved for foreign travel. For example, the Buddhist monk Thich Thai Hoa has been refused permission to travel outside the country on several occasions, including to New York in September 2000. The Government allowed many bishops and priests to travel freely within their dioceses and allowed greater, but still restricted, freedom for travel outside these areas, particularly in many ethnic areas. Local officials reportedly discourage priests from entering Son La and Lai Chau provinces. Upon return from international travel, citizens, including clergy, officially are required to surrender their passports; this law is enforced unevenly.

The Government does not designate persons' religions on passports, although citizens' "family books," which are household identification documents, identify religious and ethnic affiliation. The Government allows, and in some cases encourages, links with coreligionists in other countries if the religious groups are approved by the Government.

The Government actively discourages contacts between the UBCV and its foreign Buddhist supporters, and between illegal Protestant organizations such as the house churches and their foreign supporters. Contacts between Vatican authorities and the domestic Catholic Church are permitted, and the Government maintains a regular, active dialog with the Vatican on a range of issues including organizational activities, the prospect of establishing diplomatic relations, and a possible papal visit.

Adherence to a religious faith generally does not disadvantage persons in civil, economic, and secular life, although it likely would prevent advancement to the highest government and military ranks. Avowed religious practice is a bar to membership in the Communist Party, although anecdotal reports indicate that a handful of the 2 million Communist Party members are religious believers. Increasingly, party and government officials discuss attending (or their family members attending) Christian church services or visiting pagodas.

The Government does not permit religious instruction in public schools; however, it does permit clergy to teach at universities in subjects in which they are qualified. Several Catholic nuns and at least one Catholic priest teach at Ho Chi Minh City universities. They are not allowed to wear religious dress when they teach or to identify themselves as clergy. Catholic Sunday religious education in Ho Chi Minh City increased. Khmer Theravada Buddhists and Cham Muslims regularly hold religious and language classes outside of normal classroom hours in their respective pagodas and mosques.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

A significant number of religious believers experience harassment because they operate without legal sanction. Local officials have persecuted "unregistered" Protestant believers in the northwestern provinces and the Central Highlands for a number of years, including through the demolition of churches and forced renunciations of faith. UBCV leaders continued to be harassed and their rights severely restricted by the Government. Officials also have detained or otherwise harassed some persons who have used purported spiritual activities or powers to cheat and deceive believers in areas with large numbers of ethnic minorities. Police authorities routinely question persons who hold dissident religious or political views. Credible reports suggest that police arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practice, particularly in mountainous ethnic minority areas.

The authorities in the northwest provinces severely restrict the religious freedom of evangelical Protestants, including ethnic Hmong and ethnic Tai. The growth of Protestant house churches in ethnic minority areas continued to lead to tensions with local officials, particularly in several border provinces. Several leaders of these churches, especially among the Hmong in the northwest and among ethnic minority groups in the Central Highlands, reportedly were harassed or detained. The secretive nature of the house churches, notably among ethnic minorities, has contributed to greater repression of these groups. Provincial officials in certain northwest provinces do not allow churches or pagodas to operate. They have arrested and imprisoned believers for practicing their faith nonviolently despite provisions of the Constitution that permit such activities.

On several occasions, small groups of Protestants belonging to house churches were subjected to arbitrary detention after local officials broke up unsanctioned religious meetings. There were reported instances, particularly in isolated provinces in the northwest and Central Highlands, in which Protestant house church followers were punished or fined by local officials for participation in peaceful religious activities such as worship and Bible study. According to credible reports from the Central Highlands, some local officials extorted cattle and money from Protestants in those areas. It cannot be confirmed whether their religious affiliation or other factors were the cause of this reported extortion.

At the beginning of 1999, there were more than 25 Hmong Protestants imprisoned, primarily in Lai Chau province, for “teaching religion illegally” or “abusing the rights of a citizen to cause social unrest.” Following protests by church leaders and international attention to the detentions, most of the detainees were released. Among those Hmong Protestant leaders still believed to be imprisoned are Hmong Protestant leaders Sinh Phay Pao, Va Sinh Giay, Vang Sua Giang, and Phang A Dong, who had been arrested in Ha Giang province late in 1999. Phang A Dong was charged with illegally traveling to China without a visa or passport.

The Government’s treatment of Hmong Protestants is complicated by several factors, including their religious practices. Some Hmong who fought against the Government in the past live in sensitive regions that border China and Laos, which leads the Government to question their loyalty. Among the Hmong, there are two distinct religious groups. One group’s members follow a traditional form of Christianity while the other group’s beliefs contain elements such as a doomsday belief in the impending end of the world that lies outside more mainstream tenets. These beliefs have exacerbated the authorities’ anxiety about the Hmong. The Government does not differentiate between the two groups in their general treatment of the Hmong.

In December 1999, Nguyen Thi Thuy, a Protestant house church leader in Phu Tho province, was sentenced to 1 year in prison after police raided her home, where she was leading a Bible study group. In March 2000, in what is believed to be the first case of its kind, a defense lawyer appealed Thuy’s conviction by arguing that her arrest in her home while practicing her faith violated her constitutional right to religious freedom. A judge dismissed her appeal, and her 1-year sentence was upheld. She was released in September 2000 after serving 11 months of her 12-month sentence. An ethnic Hre church leader, Dinh Troi, was detained in Quang Ngai province in 1999. It is believed that he still was detained at the end of the period covered by this report.

Despite the Government’s restrictions, Protestant worship continued to grow. Repression of Protestantism in the Central Highlands is complicated by the presence of groups that advocate political autonomy for the indigenous peoples who live in the area, particularly in southern Gia Lai and northwestern Dak Lak provinces. A small number of Protestant pastors in this area reportedly support the establishment of an autonomous “Dega” state; however, the more orthodox majority of Protestant pastors in the Highlands appear not to support such political change.

In early February 2001, ethnic minority groups held widespread demonstrations in the Central Highlands provinces of Gia Lai and Dak Lak in part to protest the loss of traditional homelands to recent migrants—mostly ethnic Vietnamese—and abusive police treatment in the provinces. According to unconfirmed reports, in the immediate aftermath of the February demonstrations, between 1 and 5 persons were killed as a result of police actions, and allegedly hundreds were injured in beatings by authorities. Two local leaders of Protestant congregations in Dak Lak, Ama Ger and Ama Bion, were detained in February 2001 and reportedly continued to be held in Buon Ma Thuot at the end of the period covered by this report. Hundreds of persons reportedly went into hiding, and many fled to Cambodia. The Government refused to allow independent observers into the area to make an assessment of the events. Protestant sources also reported that between February 2001 and the end of the period covered by this report, authorities in the Central Highland provinces and in neighboring mountainous areas of the coastal provinces arrested and beat numerous Protestant believers in a widespread government crackdown during that period.

There were reports that between February and April 2001 groups of vigilantes abducted and beat Protestant worshippers in the Central Highlands’ provinces. In April 2001, assailants severely beat two ethnic Vietnamese female primary school teachers on their return from a Protestant service in Phu Nhon District in Gia Lai Province. There were dozens of additional specific reports of similar beatings in the area. For example, in March there were unconfirmed reports that authorities demolished churches in Plei Lau Village in Phu Nhon district.

The government response to ethnic unrest in the Central Highlands was directed at the organizers of the demonstrations; however, because some organizers also were Protestant leaders, some local authorities cracked down on Protestants in their areas. There are reports that from February through the end of the period covered by this report, groups of vigilantes abducted and beat Protestant worshippers. According to one report, the Protestant churches in Ban Don district in Dak Lak province were closed following the February 2001 demonstrations; authorities prevented all assembly for worship since that time.

In March 2001, teachers at a public primary school in the same district reportedly ordered all the Christian students to renounce Christ. When the students refused,

they were suspended from school and not allowed to return until further notice. It is not known if they remained suspended at mid-year 2001. On March 10, 2001, soldiers dispersed approximately 200 persons who had gathered at a Protestant church in Plei Lau village in Phu Nhon district of Gia Lak province. A fight ensued in which one person using a spear reportedly was killed by gunfire when he attacked a soldier. Authorities later burned the church to the ground.

The Government continued to isolate certain political and religious dissidents, in particular leaders of the UBCV, by restricting their movements and by pressuring the supporters and family members of others. Since 1982 Thich Huyen Quang, the Supreme Patriarch of the UBCV, has lived in Quang Ngai Province under conditions resembling house arrest. Thich Huyen Quang confirmed that he must request permission before leaving the pagoda, which is surrounded on all sides by a pond and sits directly across the street from the local police station, whose officers monitor all visitors to and from the pagoda. He is not allowed to lead prayers or participate in worship as a monk, nor is he able to receive visits from sympathetic monks, sometimes several of whom attempt to visit each week. After meeting with him, visitors are occasionally questioned by police. Thich Huyen Quang has called for the Government to recognize and sanction the operations of the UBCV. In April 2000, Thich Huyen Quang wrote a letter to the Communist Party General Secretary, the President, and the Prime Minister, calling on them to proclaim April 30, the anniversary of the “reunification” of North and South Vietnam, “the Communist Party’s National Day of Contrition.” On July 5, police reportedly entered his pagoda and berated him about the letter. Government officials reportedly proposed last year to move Thich Huyen Quang to Hanoi, where medical care for his chronic conditions would be better, but he has refused.

In March 1999, Thich Huyen Quang was visited by senior UBCV leader Thich Quang Do for the first time in 18 years, but after 3 days of meetings both were held for questioning by police, and Thich Quang Do was escorted by police to his pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City. In February 2001, Thich Quang Do again visited Thich Huyen Quang in Quang Ngai Province for 1 day. While he was returning to Ho Chi Minh City, police detained Thich Quang Do twice and questioned him for a total of 6 hours, at one point forcing him to undergo a strip-search. In June 2001, authorities enforced the 5-year administrative surveillance order that he was under following his release from prison in 1998 by confining him to his living quarters under guard. The confinement was in response to his attempt to organize a group of monks and nuns to go to Quang Ngai province to take Thich Huyen Quang to Ho Chi Minh City.

In February 2001, UBCV monks Thich Thai Hoa and Thich Chi Mau organized a “week of prayer” at Tu Hieu Pagoda in Hue City in the central part of the country. From 500 and 1,000 persons came to the pagoda during the week to offer their support. Local authorities reportedly ordered public high school and college students to attend classes throughout the week, even on Sunday—traditionally a non-school day—in an attempt to prevent their attending the event. Persons who visited the pagoda during the week reported that security forces detained and questioned them at local police stations.

Hoa Hao believers stated that a number of church leaders of various unrecognized Hoa Hao groups remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report. On December 20, 2000, Le Quang Liem, Chairman and founder of the unrecognized Hoa Hao Central Buddhist Church (HHCBC), organized approximately 300 followers to participate in commemoration ceremonies at the Hoa Hao founder’s ancestral home in An Giang Province. They joined approximately 10,000 other Hoa Hao followers, but Liem’s group wore caps and carried small flags identifying them as HHCBC. When approximately 50 to 60 persons attacked Liem’s group, police intervened; however, according to several witnesses, police attacked Liem’s group, beating them with batons. Police beat one follower, Truong Van Duc, so severely that he was hospitalized. Police arrested Duc and Ho Van Trong in connection with this incident. On May 20, 2001, they were tried, convicted, and received 12-year and 4-year prison sentences respectively.

On March 17, 2001, Le Quang Liem met with HHCBC Vice-Chairman Nguyen Van Dien and several other HHCBC supporters in a park in Ho Chi Minh City. Police detained Liem after he left the group. They released him, but on the following day place him under formal house arrest under the 1997 Government Decree 31 CPP on Administrative Detention. Liem claims that he was severely beaten while in police custody. Police also detained the other members of the group who had remained in the park. Police claimed that several members of the group were preparing to immolate themselves. They later produced cans of gasoline and gasoline-soaked clothing as evidence. Nguyen Van Dien was returned to his home province of Dong Thap and placed under a 2-year house arrest there. The other members of

the group who had been detained were released. Two days later, on March 19, 75-year-old HHCBC supporter Nguyen Thi Thu burned herself to death at a village on the border between Dong Thap and Vinh Long Provinces to support the Hoa Hao cause. It is unknown whether Thu was among those detained in Ho Chi Minh City on March 17.

On March 28, 2000, eight Hoa Hao supporters were arrested at Phu My (Hoa Hao) village. Three of them subsequently were released, but five were tried on September 26, 2000, convicted, and received the following sentences: Truong Van Thuc, 3 years; Nguyen Chau Lan, 3 years; Le Van Mong (Le Thien Hoa), 2 years; Tran Van Be Cao, 1 year; and Tran Nguyen Hon, 1 year. Thuc, Lan, and presumably, Mong are incarcerated at Z30A K16 prison at Xuan Loc in Dong Nai Province. Be Cao and Hon were scheduled to have been released at the end of March 2001, having served their terms. On June 14, 2000, Vo Van Buu, one of the three detained March 28 but released April 9, 2000, was rearrested, along with his wife, Mai Thi Dung, after they met with Nguyen Van Dien, the Vice Chairman of the non-government-sanctioned HHCBC. The couple was tried in September 2000 and convicted. Buu received a 30-month prison term; Dung was given an 18-month suspended sentence. Later in September, Dung slashed her stomach in protest. She was hospitalized, then released on the following day. Buu remained incarcerated at the end of the period covered by this report.

On April 14, 1999, police detained Ha Hai in An Giang Province and subsequently placed him under house arrest. In February 2000, Hai was named the third-ranking officer of the HHCBC. Hai broke his house arrest orders in November 2000 by traveling to Ho Chi Minh City along with other HHCBC officers and supporters to help organize a demonstration planned to coincide with the visit to Ho Chi Minh City of then-U.S. President Clinton. Police in Ho Chi Minh City arrested Hai (along with four others, including Nguyen Van Dien and Mai Thi Dung, who were later released from custody) and detained him in a jail in An Giang Province pending trial. On November 28, a group of persons armed with clubs beat three of Hai's adult children who had accompanied his wife on a visit to the jail. The following day, several dozen persons protested the beatings at the police station. On December 7, approximately 1,000 persons approached the jail to demand Hai's release. When police dispersed them, a clash ensued, and in protest, Vo Hoang Van stabbed himself in the stomach and Mai Thi Dung slit her own throat. Both eventually recovered. Hai was tried on January 16, 2001, was convicted, and received a 5-year prison sentence for abusing his "democratic rights." He remained imprisoned at the end of the period covered by this report.

Priests and lay brothers of a Vietnamese Catholic order, the Congregation of the Mother Co-Redemptrix, continue to face Government restrictions. Founded by Reverend Tran Dinh Thu in Bui Chu Diocese in 1953, the historically anti-Communist order reestablished its headquarters in Thu Duc District of Ho Chi Minh City in 1954. In 1988 police surrounded the 15-acre site and arrested all the priests and lay persons inside the compound. Father Thu was released in 1993 after serving nearly 5 years of a 20-year prison term. Most of the other Co-Redemptrix priests and lay brothers subsequently were released. However, Reverend Pham Minh Tri and lay person Nguyen Thien Phung remain incarcerated at the end of the period covered by this report.

At Tu Hieu Pagoda, on the day before the start of the "week of prayer," Catholic Father Nguyen Van Ly, Hoa Hao elder Le Quang Liem, and Buddhists monks Thich Thien Hanh and Chan Tri met for the purpose of forming an interreligious body independent of government authority. Later in the same month, following hearings by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (CIRF), police surrounded Father Ly's church and placed him under administrative detention. His detention was reported widely in the state-controlled press, which identified him as a "traitor" for submitting written testimony critical of the Government to the CIRF. On May 16, 2001, the police—allegedly as many as 300—surrounded his church, formally arrested him. He remained in detention without trial at the end of the period covered by this report; he was reportedly engaged in a hunger strike.

In October 1998, the authorities detained two Cao Daiists in Kien Giang province, Le Kim Bien and Pham Cong Hien, who sought to meet with United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance Abdelfattah Amor and sentenced them to 2 years' imprisonment on a conviction of "taking advantage of their democratic liberties to endanger the welfare of the State and society." Bien was released on April 30, 2000, as part of a national amnesty. Hien was released in October 2000, after completing his sentence. Three Cao Daiists, Lam Thai The (Lam The Thanh), Van Hoa Vui, and Do Hoang Giam were released from prison in the April 30, 2000 amnesty. Two senior Cao Dai clergy, Archbishop Thuong Nha Thanh and Archbishop Thai The Thanh, who have chosen not to participate in the government-sanctioned

Cao Dai Management Committee, reportedly were free to worship but were not allowed to meet with foreigners.

The Penal Code establishes penalties for offenses that are defined only vaguely, including “attempting to undermine national unity” by promoting “division between religious believers and non-believers.” In some cases, particularly involving Hmong Protestants, authorities imprisoned persons for practicing religion illegally. They use provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years without trial for “abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion.” There were complaints that officials fabricated evidence and that some of the provisions of the law used to convict religious prisoners contradict the right to freedom of religion.

A 1997 directive on administrative detention gives national and local security officials broad powers to detain and monitor citizens and control where they live and work for up to 2 years if they are believed to be threatening “national security.” In their implementation of administrative detention, some local authorities held persons under conditions resembling house arrest. The authorities use administrative detention as a means of controlling persons whom they believe hold dissident opinions.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of religious detainees and religious prisoners. There is little transparency in the justice system, and it is very difficult to obtain confirmation of when persons are detained, imprisoned, tried, or released. By the end of the period covered by this report, there reportedly were at least seven religious detainees who were held without formal arrest or charge; however, the number may be greater since persons sometimes are detained for questioning and held under administrative detention regulations without being charged or without their detention being publicized. The seven persons believed to be detained are ethnic minority Protestants: Hmong Protestants Sinh Phay Pao, Va Sinh Giay, Vang Sua Giang, and Phang A Dong in Ha Giang province; Dinh Troi, an ethnic Hre Protestant detained in Quang Ngai in 1999; and Ama Ger and Ama Bion detained in Dak Lak in February 2001. Unconfirmed reports suggest there may be other Protestants detained in the Central Highlands. Other religious leaders, most prominently Supreme Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang of the UBCV, are held under conditions that resemble administrative detention. Thich Huyen Quang is not allowed to leave the pagoda where he lives in Quang Ngai province without express police permission, and only then for medical appointments in the isolated town where he stays. In addition a number of UBCV Buddhists such as Thich Quang Do, Cao Dai dignitaries, and Catholic, Hoa Hao, and Protestant believers have their movements restricted or are watched and followed by police.

There are an estimated 14 religious prisoners, although the actual number may be higher. This figure is difficult to verify because of the secrecy surrounding the arrest, detention, and release process. In a positive development, many of the ethnic Hmong Protestants who were imprisoned in Lai Chau province at the beginning of 1999 are believed to have been released by the end of the period covered by this report. Those persons believed to be religious prisoners as of June include: UBCV monks Thich Them Minh and Thich Hue Dang; Catholic priests Pham Minh Tri and Nguyen Van Ly, and Catholic lay person Nguyen Thien Phung; Hoa Hao lay persons Truong Van Thuc, Nguyen Chau Lan, Le Van Mong, Vo Van Buu, Ha Hai, Le Van Son, Ho Van Trong, Truong Van Duc, and Le Minh Triet (Tu Triet). (Le Minh Triet, also known as Tu Triet, is a Hoa Hao leader arrested in 1990 for sending information about Vietnam to Radio Free Asia and other international media; he is serving a 12-year sentence in Xuan Loc in Dong Nai Province.) In addition Hoa Hao leaders Le Quang Liem and Nguyen Van Dien remain under formal administrative detention (house arrest).

Forced Religious Conversion

On multiple occasions, Hmong Protestant Christians in several northwestern villages reportedly were forced by local officials to recant their faith and to perform traditional Hmong religious rites such as drinking blood from sacrificed chickens mixed with rice wine.

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

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

While the status of respect for religious freedom remained fundamentally unchanged during the period covered by this report, there were improvements in some areas, such as the recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam in April 2001, the compromise leading to the promotions of several hundred Cao Dai clergy, and the release of some persons detained or arrested because of their reli-

gious beliefs. Local governments in some parts of the country relaxed the restrictions on religious organizations from engaging in charitable and social activities. In addition there was continued gradual expansion of the parameters for individual believers of officially recognized churches to practice their faiths. In some provinces in which harassment of religious believers has been very severe, local officials have lost their positions because of religious restrictions. Many believers who worship in officially recognized churches are able to practice their faith publicly without interference from government officials. This continued a trend of the past several years toward less official interference in the lives of citizens, such as the diminution of the block warden system, which is now much less pervasive and intrusive in monitoring persons. On religious celebration days, churches, pagodas, and temples are filled by worshippers. Most of the country's religious believers benefit from this development.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities, and there were no instances of societal discrimination or violence based on religion during the period covered by this report. In Ho Chi Minh City, there were nascent efforts at informal ecumenical dialog by leaders of disparate religious communities. Various dissident elements of the UBCV Buddhists, Catholics, Cao Dai, and Hoa Hao appear to be successful in networking with each other; many of them formed bonds while serving prison terms at Xuan Loc.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City actively and regularly raised U.S. concerns about religious freedom with a wide variety of Government officials including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of Religion, the Ministry of Public Security, and other government offices in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and provincial capitals. Embassy and Consulate officials also meet and talk with leaders of all of the major religious groups, recognized as well as unregistered.

The U.S. Ambassador raised religious freedom problems with senior cabinet ministers including the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, senior Government and Communist Party advisors, the head of the Government's Office of Religion, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Security, and the chairpersons of Provincial People's Committees around the country, among others. Other Embassy and Consulate General officials also raised U.S. concerns on religious freedom with senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security and with provincial officials. Embassy and Consulate General officials maintained regular contact with the key Government offices responsible for respect for human rights. Embassy officers informed government officials that progress on religious problems and human rights have an impact on the degree of full normalization of bilateral relations. The Embassy's public affairs officer distributed information about U.S. concerns regarding religious freedom to Communist Party and Government officials.

In their representations to the Government, the Ambassador and other embassy officers urged recognition of a broad spectrum of religious groups, including members of the UBCV, the Protestant house churches, and dissenting Hoa Hao and Cao Dai groups. In general representations by Embassy and Consulate General officials focused on specific abuses and restrictions on religious freedom. On several occasions the Embassy's and the Consulate General's interventions on problems involving religious freedom have resulted in direct improvements, such as the release of some religious prisoners. The recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam followed direct advocacy by U.S. officials during the annual Human Rights Dialog with Vietnam and ongoing discussions involving the Ambassador, the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, and other U.S. officials. The Ambassador and other U.S. Mission officials regularly and periodically meet with senior officials of the Government Committee on Religion in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, raising the full range of our concerns about religious freedom for all communities in the country.

Representatives of the Embassy and Consulate General met on several occasions with leaders of all the major religious communities, including Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Muslims. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, maintain a regular dialog with foreign NGO's. In February 2001, a Consulate General officer met with the government-sanctioned Hoa Hao Committee in An Giang Province and maintained regular contact with Hoa Hao dissident Le Quang Liem and with Hoa Hao elder Tran Huu Duyen. The Consulate General also maintained regular contact with UBCV monk Thich Quang Do and other UBCV

Buddhists and officially recognized Buddhists. In May 2001, a Consulate General officer met with the 95-year-old founder of the Co-Redemprix Order Father Tran Dinh Thu in Ho Chi Minh City. An Embassy officer met with Thich Thai Hoa in Hue in September. Embassy and Consulate General officers met with the Catholic Archbishops of Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Hue as well as other members of the Episcopal Conference and outspoken priest Chan Tin. Embassy and Consulate General officers also met repeatedly with leaders of Protestant “tin lanh” and house churches, and Consulate General officers met with leaders of the Cao Dai and Muslim communities.

The U.S. Government commented publicly on the status of religious freedom in the country on several occasions. In addition the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom held hearings on the status of religious freedom in Vietnam on February 13, 2001. The Commission weighed testimony from both Father Nguyen Van Ly and Buddhist Thich Thai Hoa, as well as from a number of persons residing abroad and in April published a report of its findings based on that information.

EUROPE

ALBANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 11,100 square miles, and its population is approximately 3,490,000. It has a largely homogeneous ethnic population, consisting of Ghegs in the north and Tosks in the south. The southern part of the country has ethnic Greek communities estimated at 3 percent of the population. Other small minorities include the Roma, Egyptian people (an ethnic group similar to the Roma but which does not speak the Roma language), Vlachs, Macedonians, and Chams.

The majority of citizens are secular in orientation after decades of rigidly enforced atheism under the Communist regime, which ended in 1990. In spite of this secularism, most citizens traditionally associate themselves with a religious group. Albanians of Muslim background make up the largest traditional religious group (roughly 65 to 70 percent of the population) and are divided into two communities: those associated with a moderate form of Sunni Islam and those associated with the Bektashi school (a particularly liberal form of Shi'a Sufism). The country is the world center of the Bektashi school, which moved from Turkey to Albania in 1925 after the revolution of Ataturk. Bektashis are concentrated mainly in central and southern regions of the country and claim that 45 percent of the country's Muslims belong to their school.

The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania (referred to as Orthodox) and the Roman Catholic Church are the other large denominations. An estimated 20 to 30 percent of the population belong to communities that are traditionally Albanian Orthodox, and 10 percent are associated with Roman Catholicism. The Orthodox Church became independent from Constantinople's authority in 1929 but was not recognized as autocephalous, or independent, until 1937. The Church's 1954 statute states that all its archbishops must be of Albanian citizenship. However, the current archbishop is a Greek citizen, because there are no Albanian clerics who meet the Orthodox requirement that higher clergy must be celibate.

The Muslims are concentrated mostly in the middle of the country and somewhat in the south; the Orthodox are concentrated mainly in the south, and Catholics in the north of the country; however, this division is not strict. The Greek minority, concentrated in the south, belongs to the Orthodox Church. There are no data available on active participation in formal religious services, but unofficial sources state that 30 to 40 percent of the population practice a religion. Foreign clergy, including Muslim clerics, Christian and Baha'i missionaries, members of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and many others freely carry out religious activities.

According to updated data provided by the State Committee on Cults during the reporting period, there are 12 different Muslim societies and groups with some 60 to 70 representatives in the country. There are 50 Christian societies and groups and more than 1,100 missionaries representing Christian or Baha'i organizations. The largest foreign missionary groups are American, British, Italian, Greek, and Arab.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. According to the 1998 Constitution, there is no official religion and all religions are equal. However, the predominant religious communities (Muslim, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic) function as juridical persons and enjoy a greater social recognition and status based on their historical presence in the country. All registered religious groups have the right to hold bank accounts and to own property and buildings. Official holidays include religious holidays from all three predominant faiths.

Religious movements—with the exception of the three de facto recognized religions—can acquire the official status of a juridical person only by registering under the Law on Associations, which recognizes the status of a nonprofit association irrespective of whether the organization has a cultural, recreational, religious, or humanitarian character. The Government does not require registration or licensing of religious groups; however, the State Committee on Cults, founded in September 1999, is currently registering all foreign religious organizations. No groups reported difficulties registering during the period covered by this report.

The State Committee on Cults, created by executive decision and based on the Constitution, is charged with regulating the relations between the State and religious communities. The Committee recognizes the equality of religious communities and respects their independence. The Committee works to protect freedom of religion and to promote interreligious development, cooperation, and understanding. It organized seminars in December 2000 and February 2001 to discuss religious tolerance. The Committee claims that registration facilitates the granting of residence permits by police to foreign employees of various religious organizations; however, some foreign religious organizations have complained that obtaining registration has not made gaining residence permits any less cumbersome administratively. There is no law or regulation that forces religious organizations to register with the Committee. There is no law on religious communities, although one is mandated by the new Constitution. Most religious communities recognize the need for such a law to clarify their rights and responsibilities and relationship to the Government. The Committee has shown a willingness to act as a mechanism for creation and passage of such a law; however, no movement on the issue was made during the period covered by this report.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The country is a secular state and religion is not taught in public schools. According to official figures, there are 29 religious schools in the country with approximately 2,745 students. The State Committee on Cults has the right to approve the curricula of religious schools. Students are not allowed to demonstrate their religious affiliations in public schools. In one recent case, the Government prohibited three female students from wearing headscarves in a public school. No restriction is imposed on families regarding the way they raise their children with respect to religious practices.

In 1967 the Communists banned all religious practices and expropriated the property of the established Islamic, Orthodox, and Catholic Churches. The Government has not yet returned all the properties and religious objects under its control that were confiscated under the Communist regime. In cases where religious buildings were returned, the Government often failed to return the land that surrounds the buildings, sometimes due to redevelopment claims by private individuals who began farming it or using it for other purposes. The Government does not have the resources to compensate churches adequately for the extensive damage many religious properties suffered. Although it recently recovered some confiscated property, including one large parcel of land near Tirana's main square, the Orthodox Church has complained that it had difficulty in recovering some religious icons for restoration and safekeeping.

The Albanian Evangelical Alliance, an association of more than 100 Protestant churches throughout the country, complained that it encountered administrative obstacles to building churches, accessing the media, and receiving exemptions from customs duties. The growing evangelical community continues to seek official recognition and participation in the religious affairs section of the Council of Ministers.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious groups are generally amicable, and tolerance is widespread. Society is largely secular. Inter-marriage among religious groups is extremely common. There are amicable relations between the three main religions in the country, and religious communities take pride in the tolerance and understanding that prevails among them.

The Archbishop of the country's Orthodox Church has noted incidents in which the Orthodox and their churches or other buildings have been the targets of vandalism. However, he concluded that the problem was largely due to the country's weak public order. There were no new incidents of vandalism reported during the period covered by this report. Members of the ethnic Greek minority as well as ethnic Albanian and Greek members of the Orthodox Church left the country in large numbers between 1990 and 1991, with another large exodus between 1997 and 1998 because of the lack of security and poor economic prospects. Ethnic Greek Albanians, among others, continue to leave the country in search of employment and/or permanent residence elsewhere.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has numerous initiatives to foster the development of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the country, and to further religious freedom and tolerance. The U.S. Embassy periodically has urged the Government to return church lands to the denominations that lost them under Communist rule. Embassy officers, including the Ambassador, meet frequently (both in formal office calls and at representational events) with the heads of the major religious communities in the country. The U.S. Embassy has been active in urging tolerance and moderation on the part of the Government's Committee on Cults.

ANDORRA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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. There is no state religion; however, the Roman Catholic Church enjoys some privileges not available to other faiths.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has an area of 180.7 square miles and a population of 66,824. Very few official statistics are available relative to religion; however, traditionally approximately 90 percent of the population are Roman Catholic. The population consists largely of immigrants, with full citizens representing less than 20 percent of the total. The immigrants, who are primarily from Spain, Portugal, and France, also are largely Roman Catholic. It is estimated that, of the Catholic population, about half are active church attendees. Other religious groups include Muslims (which predominantly are represented among the approximately 2,000 North African immigrants and are split between two groups, one more fundamentalist); the New Apostolic Church; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons); several Protestant denominations, including the Anglican Church; the Reunification Church; and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Foreign missionaries are active and operate without restriction. For example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses proselytize from door to door.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution acknowledges a special relationship with the Roman 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 the two constitutionally-designated princes of the country (who serves equally as joint head of state with the President of France) is Bishop Joan Marti Alanis of the Spanish town of La Seu d’Urgell.

The Catholic Church receives no direct subsidies from the Government. However, the Government continues to pay monthly stipends to each of the seven parishes (administrative units of government, though the term originally was religiously determined) for the continuance of their historic work in maintaining vital records, such as birth and marriage, despite having a fully legal civil registry system in the country.

There is no law that clearly requires legal registration and approval of religions and religious worship. However, the Government is considering completing a draft law on associations that may ultimately govern some aspects of religious activity. Although the terms of the draft law are not publicly known, the authorities reportedly are considering how to treat the activity of so-called “sects” or other groups whose activities may be considered injurious to public health, safety, morals, or order. However, a report from the Ombudsman issued in 2000 maintains that there is no real risk of negative influence from such so-called destructive sects, because of their low membership numbers and because of the orientation of their theology. The report notes that for instance, the few Unification Church members known to reside in the country are very directly involved in social work with the underprivileged. Under a 1993 law, associations must be registered. This register has documented civic associations, but to date no religious organization, including the Roman Catholic Church, has requested registration or been asked by the Government to register.

Instruction in the tenets of the Catholic faith is available in public schools on an optional basis, outside of both regular school hours and the time frame set aside for elective school activities, such as civics or ethics. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the Government pays their salaries. Some parental groups and Co-Prince Bishop Marti reportedly prefer restoring the optional religion classes to the time frame set aside for elective activities.

The Government has not taken any official steps to promote interfaith understanding, nor has it sponsored any programs or forums to coordinate interfaith dialog. However, it has been responsive to certain needs of the Muslim community, such as expeditiously providing an imam with the documentation necessary to establish himself in the country. On occasion the Government has made public facilities available to various religious organizations for religious activities.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such persons to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Societal attitudes between and among differing religious groups in general appear to be amicable and tolerant. For example, the Catholic Church of la Massana lends its sanctuary twice per month to the Anglican community, so that visiting Anglican clergy can conduct services for the English speaking community. Although those who practice religions other than Roman Catholicism tend to be immigrants and otherwise not integrated fully into the local community, there appears to be little or no obstacle to their practicing their own religions.

There are no significant ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding among adherents of different religions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. officials discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Both the U.S. Ambassador, resident in Madrid, and the Consul General, resident in Barcelona, have met with Bishop Marti, the leader of the Catholic community.

ARMENIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the law specifies some restrictions on the religious freedom of adherents of minority faiths, and there were some restrictions in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Armenian Apostolic Church, which has formal legal status as the national church, enjoys some privileges not available to adherents of other faiths. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to have their application for legal recognition as a registered religion rejected and report individual acts of discrimination. Other denominations occasionally report acts of discrimination, usually by mid-level or lower level government officials.

Relations among religions in society are generally amicable; however, societal attitudes towards some minority religions are ambivalent, and antipathy towards Muslims remains a problem.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 11,496 square miles, and its population is approximately 2 million.

The country is ethnically homogenous, with approximately 95 percent of the population classified as ethnic Armenian. About 90 percent of citizens belong nominally to the Armenian Apostolic Church, an Eastern Christian denomination whose spiritual center is located at the cathedral and monastery of Echmiatsin. Religious observance was discouraged strongly in the Soviet era, leading to a sharp decline in the number of active churches and priests, the closure of virtually all monasteries, and the nearly complete absence of religious education. As a result, the level of religious practice is relatively low, although many former atheists now identify themselves with the national church.

For many citizens, Christian identity is an ethnic trait, with only a loose connection to religious belief. This identification was accentuated by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988-94, during which Armenia and Azerbaijan expelled their respective Azeri Muslim and Armenian Christian minorities, creating huge refugee populations in both countries. The head of the Church, Catholicos Karekin II (alternate spelling Garegin) was elected in October 1999 at Echmiatsin with the participation of Armenian delegates from around the world.

In 2001 the Armenian Apostolic Church engaged in a dispute with its Moscow archbishop, who was removed from office and excommunicated in May.

There are comparatively small, but in many cases growing, communities of the following faiths: Yezidi (a Kurdish religious/ethnic group which includes elements derived from Zoroastrianism, Islam, and animism, with some 50-60,000 nominal adherents); Catholic, both Roman and Mekhitarist (Armenian Uniate) (approximately 180,000 adherents); Pentecostal (approximately 25,000); Armenian Evangelical Church (approximately 5,000); Greek Orthodox (approximately 6,000); Baptist (approximately 2,000); Jehovah's Witnesses (approximately 6,000); unspecified "charismatic" Christian (about 3,000); Seventh-Day Adventist; Mormon; Jewish (500-1,000); Muslim; Baha'i; Hare Krishna; and pagan. Yezidis are concentrated primarily in agricultural areas around Mount Aragats, northwest of Yerevan. Armenian Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christians are concentrated in the northern region, while most Jews, Mormons and Baha'is are located in Yerevan. There is a remnant Muslim Kurdish community of a few hundred persons, many of which live in the Abovian region; a small group of Muslims of Azeri descent live primarily along the eastern or northern borders. In Yerevan there are approximately 1,000 Muslims, including Kurds, Iranians, and temporary residents from the Middle East.

Jehovah's Witnesses continue their missionary work fairly visibly and reported net gains in membership during 2000 and 2001. Evangelical Christians and Mormons also are engaged in missionary work.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the law specifies some restrictions on the religious freedom of adherents of faiths other than the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Constitution also provides for freedom of conscience, including the right either to believe or to adhere to atheism. The 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience, amended in 1997, establishes the separation of church and state, but grants the Armenian Apostolic Church official status as the national church. A 1993 presidential decree, later superseded by the 1997 law, supplemented the 1991 law and further strengthened the position of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The 1991 law requires all other religious denominations and organizations to register with the State Council on Religious Affairs. The State Council on Religious Affairs is a state agency under the Prime Minister, without cabinet level representation. The Council does not include representatives of minority religions in its activities. Petitioning organizations must "be free from materialism and of a purely spiritual nature," and must subscribe to a doctrine based on "historically recognized Holy Scriptures." To qualify a religious organization must have at least 200 adult members (increased in 1997 from the previous figure of 50). A religious organization that has been refused registration may not publish newspapers or magazines, rent meeting places, broadcast programs on television or radio, or officially sponsor the visas of visitors. No previously registered religious group seeking re-registration under the 1997 law has been denied; however, the Council still denies registration to Jehovah's Witnesses. Several other religious groups are unregistered, specifically the Molokhany, a branch of the Russian "Old Believers," and some Yezidis. According to an official of the State Council on Religious Affairs, those two groups, which number in the hundreds, have not sought registration. As of June 30, 2001, there were 50 religious organizations, some of which are individual congregations from within the same denomination, registered with the State Council on Religious Affairs. All existing denominations have been reregistered annually. Almost all existing denominations, except for Hare Krishnas and Jehovah's Witnesses, have been reregistered. The Hare Krishnas do not have enough members to qualify, as their numbers by 1998 had dropped below even the previous membership threshold of 50. Although Jehovah's Witnesses have enough members, the State Council on Religious Affairs continues to deny them registration.

Current legislation permits religious education in state schools only by instructors appointed by the Armenian Apostolic Church. If requested by the school principal, the Armenian Apostolic Church will send priests to teach classes in religion and religious history in those schools. Other religious groups are not allowed provide religious instruction in schools, although they may do so in private homes to children of their members.

As a result of extended negotiations between the Government and the Armenian Apostolic Church, a memorandum was signed in April 2000 that provides for the two sides to negotiate a concordat, presently scheduled to be signed in September, 2001, in time for the 1,700th anniversary celebrations of the country's conversion to Christianity. The document is expected to regulate relations between the two bodies, settle disputes over ecclesiastical properties and real estate confiscated during the Soviet period, and define the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in such fields as education, morality, and the media.

In July 1998, President Kocharian created a Human Rights Commission, which has met with many minority organizations. The Law on Religion states that the State Council on Religious Affairs is to serve as a mediator in conflicts between religious groups; however, the Council has not yet done so.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, most registered religious groups reported no serious legal impediments to their activities. However, members of faiths other than the Armenian Apostolic Church are subject to some government restrictions. In particular the 1991 law forbids "proselytizing" (undefined in the law) except by the Armenian Apostolic Church, and requires all other religious denominations and organizations to register with the State Council on Religious Affairs. The State Council on Religious Affairs continued to deny registration to Jehovah's Witnesses during the period covered by this report. The President's Human Rights Commission declined to intervene and recommended that Jehovah's Witnesses challenge their registration denial through the courts, as provided by law. Although Jehovah's Witnesses officials stated that they had filed such a legal challenge, it had not been heard by the courts by the end of the period covered by this report. An assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses approved slight changes to their charter in order

to meet the country's legal requirements (for example, changing a commitment to "proselytize" into one to "witness"), but cautioned that they could not change fundamental articles of faith, such as opposition to military service. The court previously had stated that the denial was due to the group's opposition to military service; however, in 1999 and 2000 the Council defended its refusal to accept applications by the Jehovah's Witnesses by stating that the group cannot be registered because "illegal proselytism" is allegedly integral to its activities. Discussions between Jehovah's Witnesses and the Council temporarily were suspended in 2001 due to a lack of progress on this issue. According to Jehovah's Witnesses officials, council representatives have met with them but have refused to assist in the group's efforts to gain registration.

Although the law bans foreign funding for foreign-based churches, the ban on foreign funding has not been enforced and is considered unenforceable by the State Council on Religious Affairs. The law also mandates that religious organizations other than the Armenian Apostolic Church need prior permission from the State Council on Religious Affairs to engage in religious activities in public places, to travel abroad, or to invite foreign guests to the country. However, in practice travel by religious personnel is not restricted. No action has been taken against missionaries, although groups such as the Mormons are allowed by the Council to have only a limited number of official missionaries present in the country. A 1993 presidential decree requires the State Council on Religious Affairs to investigate the activities of the representatives of registered religious organizations and to ban missionaries who engage in activities contrary to their status. However, the Council largely has been inactive, due in part to lack of resources, except for registering religious groups.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

At the end of the period covered by this report, 13 members of Jehovah's Witnesses still remained in prison charged with draft evasion or, if forcibly drafted, with desertion due to refusal to serve. During the year, 14 were released but still under house arrest, and 21 more were free on probation. Two more were in detention pending trial and seven had been released unconditionally and were not subject to future trials. A group estimated by an official of Jehovah's Witnesses to be approximately 50 members reportedly were in hiding from draft officials. Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses officials said that the increase in the number of those imprisoned persons was due to the fact that members of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been called for military service were going directly to police and turning themselves in rather than waiting until induction to declare conscientious objection.

As part of its required undertakings for joining the Council of Europe (COE), in January 2001, the Government pledged to pass a new law conforming to European standards on alternative military service within 3 years. Government officials stated that, according to their interpretation of COE regulations, those presently in prison as conscientious objectors were not required to be released until the new law was passed. However, COE officials stated that their interpretation was that the Government's undertaking required immediate release of such conscientious objectors. As of June 2001, no alternative on military service was passed before Parliament.

There are reports that hazing of new conscripts is more severe for Yezidis and other minorities. Jehovah's Witnesses are subject to even harsher treatment by military and civilian security officials, because their refusal to serve in the military is seen as a threat to national survival.

According to law, a religious organization that has been refused registration may not publish newspapers or magazines, rent meeting places, broadcast programs on television or radio, or officially sponsor the visas of visitors. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to experience difficulty renting meeting places and report that private individuals willing to rent them facilities are visited by police and warned not to do so. Lack of official visa sponsorship means that Jehovah's Witnesses visitors must pay for tourist visas. When shipped in bulk, Jehovah's Witness publications are seized at the border. Although members of Jehovah's Witnesses supposedly were allowed to bring in small quantities of printed materials for their own use, Jehovah's Witnesses officials reported that "spiritual letters" from one congregation to another, which they said were meant for internal rather than proselytizing purposes, continued to be confiscated by customs officials.

In August 2000, the mayor and the council of the town of Talin, in the western part of the country, expelled two members of Jehovah's Witnesses after residents alleged that they were going from door to door preaching and disturbing residents.

Members of Jehovah's Witnesses reported that the women were mocked and cursed by the mayor and bystanders, and that a resident of Talin who rented them rooms was threatened by the mayor with arrest and expulsion. Government officials

refused to intervene in the action, stating that the women had been preaching illegally on behalf of an unregistered group.

Other than Jehovah's Witnesses who were conscientious objectors, there were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religions in society are generally amicable; however, societal attitudes towards some minority religions are ambivalent, and antipathy towards Muslims remains a problem.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is a member of the World Council of Churches and, despite doctrinal differences, has friendly official relations with many major Christian denominations, including the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and major Protestant churches. Catholicos Karekin II visited the Vatican in November 2000, and the Vatican announced that Pope John Paul II intends to visit the country in September 2001. Relations between foreign-based religious groups and the dominant Armenian Apostolic Church are also strengthened through cooperation in assistance projects. Various registered Christian humanitarian organizations are working with the Armenian Apostolic Church to distribute humanitarian assistance and educational religious materials.

Although such activities contribute to mutual understanding, they take place in an undercurrent of competition. Suppressed through 70 years of Soviet rule, the Armenian Apostolic Church has neither the trained priests nor the material resources to fill immediately the spiritual void created by the demise of Communist ideology. Nontraditional religious organizations are viewed with suspicion, and foreign-based denominations operate cautiously for fear of being seen as a threat by the Armenian Apostolic Church. After his election in October 1999, one of the first actions of Karekin II was to create a Secretariat for Ecumenical Outreach to other Christian denominations.

Societal attitudes toward most minority religions are ambivalent. Many citizens are not religiously observant, but the link between religion and Armenian ethnicity is strong. As a result of the Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, most of the country's Muslim population was forced to leave the country. Antipathy towards Muslims remains a problem, and the few Muslims remaining in the country keep a low profile, despite generally amicable relations between the Government and Iran. There is no formally operating mosque, although Yerevan's one surviving 18th century mosque, which was restored with Iranian funding, is open for regular Friday prayers on a tenuous legal basis.

There was no officially sponsored violence reported against minority religious groups during the period. Yezidi children on occasion report hazing by teachers and classmates. Some observers report increasingly unfavorable attitudes towards Jehovah's Witnesses among the general population, both because they are seen as "unpatriotic" for refusing military service and because of a widespread but unsubstantiated belief that they pay money to the desperately poor for conversions. The press reported a number of complaints lodged by citizens against Jehovah's Witnesses for alleged illegal proselytizing. They are the focus of religious attacks and hostile preaching by some Armenian Apostolic Church clerics.

Although it is difficult to document, it is likely that there is some informal societal discrimination in employment against members of certain religious groups.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The US Ambassador and embassy officials maintain close contact with the Catholicos at Echmiatsin and with leaders of other major religious and ecumenical groups in the country. In 2000 and 2001, embassy officials met with the Military Prosecutor to discuss, among other topics, hazing of minority conscripts and the status of Jehovah's Witnesses, and in 2000, met with the State Council on Religions to urge that progress be made towards registering Jehovah's Witnesses. The Embassy also maintains regular contact with traveling regional representatives of foreign-based reli-

gious groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and raises their concerns with the Government.

AUSTRIA

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious groups. However, there is widespread societal mistrust and discrimination against members of some nonrecognized religious groups, particularly those referred to as "sects." Initially the installation of a new right-of-center coalition Government in February 2000 led to by members of minority religions expressing concerns over increased intolerance. There was no marked deterioration in the atmosphere of religious tolerance in the country during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 32,368 square miles and its population is an estimated 8.1 million. Approximately 98 percent of the population are of Germanic origin. The largest minority groups are Croatian, Slovene, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, and Roma. In recent years, the country has experienced a rise in immigration from countries such as Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which has increased the number of Muslims in the country.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the memberships of the 12 officially recognized religions are as follows: Roman Catholic Church—78.14 percent; Lutheran Church (Augsburger and Helvetic Confessions)—5 percent; Islamic community—2.04 percent; Old Catholic Church—0.24 percent; Jewish community—0.09 percent; Eastern Orthodox (Russian, Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian)—1.5 percent; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)—0.2 percent; New Apostolic Church—0.2 percent; Syrian Orthodox Church—under 0.1 percent; Armenian-Apostolic Church—under 0.1 percent; Methodist Church of Austria—under 0.1 percent; Buddhist community—under 0.1 percent. Approximately 2 percent of the population belong to nonrecognized "other faiths," while 8.64 percent consider themselves atheists. Four percent did not indicate a religious affiliation. Only about 17 percent of Roman Catholics actively participate in formal religious services. According to the Catholic Church, 44,359 Catholics left the Church in 1999, an increase of 14 percent over the previous year.

The provinces of Carinthia and Burgenland have somewhat higher percentages of Protestants than the national average, as the Counter-Reformation was less successful in those areas. The number of Muslims is higher than the national average in Vienna and the province of Vorarlberg, due to the higher share of guestworkers from Turkey in these provinces.

The vast majority of groups termed "sects" by the Government are small organizations, having under 100 members. Among the larger groups are the Church of Scientology, with between 5,000 and 10,000 members, and the Unification Church, with approximately 700 adherents throughout the country. Other groups found in the country include: Brahma Kumaris, Divine Light Mission, Divine Light Center, Eckankar, Hare Krishna, the Holosophic community, the Osho movement, Sahaja Yoga, Sai Baba, Sri Chinmoy, Transcendental Meditation, Landmark Education, the Center for Experimental Society Formation, Fiat Lux, Universal Life, and The Family.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The status of religious organizations is governed by the 1874 Law on Recognition of Churches and by a 1998 law that establishes the status of "confessional communities." Religious organizations may be divided into three legal categories (listed in descending order of status): officially recognized religious societies, religious confessional communities, and associations.

Religious recognition under the 1874 law has wide ranging implications, such as the authority to participate in the state-collected religious taxation program, to engage in religious education, and to bring into the country religious workers to act as ministers, missionaries, or teachers. Under the 1874 law, religious societies have “public corporation” status. This status permits religious societies to engage in a number of public or quasi-public activities that are denied to other religious organizations. The Constitution singles out religious societies for special recognition. State subsidies for religious teachers at both public and private schools are provided to religious societies but not granted to other religious organizations.

Previously, some nonrecognized religious groups were able to organize as legal entities or associations, although this was not possible for all groups. Some groups have organized, even while applying for recognition as religious communities under the 1874 law.

In July 1998, Jehovah’s Witnesses received the status of a confessional community. According to the January 1998 law, the group is now subject to a 10-year observation period before they are eligible for recognition.

When the law on the status of religious confessional communities came into effect in January 1998, there were 12 recognized religious societies. Although the law allowed these 12 religious societies to retain their status, it imposed new criteria on other churches that seek to achieve this status, including a 10-year observation period between the time of the application and the time it is granted.

The 1998 law allows nonrecognized religious groups to seek official status as “confessional communities” without the fiscal and educational privileges available to recognized religions. To apply groups must have at least 300 members and submit to the Government their written statutes describing the goals, rights, and obligations of members; membership regulations; officials; and financing. Groups also must submit a written version of their religious doctrine, which must differ from that of any existing religion recognized under the 1874 law or registered under the 1998 law, for a determination that their basic beliefs do not violate public security, public order, health and morals, or the rights and freedoms of citizens. The 1998 law also sets out additional criteria for eventual recognition according to the 1874 law, such as a 20-year period of existence (at least 10 of which must be as a group organized as a confessional community under the 1998 law) and membership equaling at least two one-thousandths of the country’s population. Many religious groups and independent congregations do not meet the 300-member threshold for registration under the 1998 law. Only Jehovah’s Witnesses currently meet the higher membership requirement for recognition under the 1874 law. In April 2001, the Constitutional Court upheld a previous Education Ministry finding that Jehovah’s Witnesses must fulfill the required 10-year observation period.

Religious confessional communities, once they are recognized officially as such by the Government, have juridical standing, which permits them to engage in such activities as purchasing real estate in their own names, contracting for goods and services, and other activities. The category of religious confessional community did not exist prior to the adoption of the 1998 Law on the Status of Religious Confessional Communities. A religious organization that seeks to obtain this new status is subject to a 6-month waiting period from the time of application to the Ministry of Education and Culture. According to the Ministry, as of June 30, 2001, 11 organizations had applied for the status of religious confessional community. Nine were granted the new status. The Church of Scientology and the Hindu Mandir Association withdrew their applications. The Hindu Mandir Association reapplied under the name Hindu Religious Community. The Ministry rejected the application of the Sahaja Yoga group in 1998.

The nine religious groups that have constituted themselves as confessional communities according to the 1998 law are: Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Baha’i Faith, the Baptists, the Evangelical Alliance, the Movement for Religious Renewal, the Pentecostals, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Coptic-Orthodox Church, and the Hindu Religious Community.

Religious associations that do not qualify for either religious society or confessional community status may apply to become associations under the 1951 Law on Associations. Associations are corporations under law and have many of the same rights as confessional communities, including the right to own real estate.

The Government provides subsidies to private schools run by any of the 12 officially recognized religions.

There are no restrictions on missionary activities. Although in the past nonrecognized religious groups had problems obtaining resident permits for foreign religious workers, administrative procedures adopted in 1997 have addressed this problem in part. The Austrian Evangelical Alliance, the umbrella organization for nonrecognized Christian organizations, has reported no significant problems in obtaining

visas for religious workers. While visas for religious workers of recognized religions are not subject to a numerical quota, visas for religious workers who are members of nonrecognized religions do have a numerical cap; however, this appears to be sufficient to meet current demand.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The 1998 law allowed 12 previously recognized religious societies to retain their status; however, it imposed new criteria on other churches that seek to achieve that status. Numerous religious groups not recognized by the State, as well as some religious law experts, dismiss the benefits of obtaining status under the 1998 law and have complained that the law's additional criteria for recognition under the 1874 law obstruct claims to recognition and formalize a second class status for nonrecognized groups. Some experts have questioned the 1998 law's constitutionality.

Following a 1997 denial of recognition and a court appeal, in 1998 the Education Ministry granted Jehovah's Witnesses the status of a confessional community and the group immediately requested that it be recognized as a religious group under the 1874 law. The Education Ministry denied the application on the basis that, as a confessional community, Jehovah's Witnesses would need to submit to the required 10-year observation period. The group appealed this decision to the Constitutional Court, arguing that a 10-year observation period was unconstitutional. In April 2001, the Constitutional Court upheld the Education Ministry's finding. Jehovah's Witnesses filed an appeal with the Administrative Court, arguing that the law is illegal on administrative grounds. The group also has filed an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

The Government continued its information campaign against religious sects considered potentially harmful to the interests of individuals and society. In 1999 the Ministry for Social Security and Generations issued a new edition of a controversial brochure that described numerous nonrecognized religious groups in negative terms, which many of the groups deemed offensive. This brochure includes information on Jehovah's Witnesses, despite its status as a confessional community. The Federal Office on Sects continues to collect and distribute information on organizations considered sects. Under the law, this office has independent status, but its head is appointed and supervised by the Minister for Social Security and Generations.

Despite initial fears that the inclusion of the Freedom Party (FPO) in government would lead to a decrease in tolerance for nonrecognized religious groups, the situation regarding religious freedom did not change significantly during the period covered by this report. In April 2000, then Minister for Social Security and Generations, Elisabeth Sickl (FPO), announced additional measures to "protect citizens from the damaging influence of sects, cults, and esoteric movements;" however, no new measures were implemented during her tenure. Sickl left office in October 2000 and her successor has announced no new initiatives on this subject by the end of the period covered by this report.

The former head of the Freedom Party and current Governor of Carinthia, Joerg Haider, repeatedly has made intolerant and anti-Semitic statements, including during the period covered by this report. These included verbal attacks against the head of the Jewish Community and a prominent Jewish-American campaign advisor prior to the Vienna local elections in March 2001. Although Haider repeatedly followed such statements with expressions of regret, his statements contributed to the widespread belief that he and some extreme elements of the FPO have contributed to a climate of intolerance in the country.

In April 1999, the conservative Austrian People's Party (OVP) convention formally accepted a decision made by the party's executive board in 1997 that party membership is incompatible with membership in a sect.

In 1999 the Constitutional Court ruled that denying prisoners who are members of Jehovah's Witnesses access to pastoral care because the organization was not a recognized religious society was a violation of the Constitution's provisions on religious freedom. The verdict stressed that pastoral care should be available to any person of any religious belief. Following this verdict, the Justice Ministry issued a decree on February 28, 2000, in which it instructed prison officials to make pastoral care available to prisoners who are members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Since this ruling, members of Jehovah's Witnesses have not reported any problems associated with prisoner access and pastoral care.

It remains unclear how the Constitutional Court verdict affects prisoners of other religious confessions, in particular those who are members of neither a recognized religious society nor a confessional community. Some groups have reported experiencing problems with access to pastoral care in isolated instances; however, there are no allegations of widespread problems. Access by the clergy of nonrecognized re-

ligious societies to hospitals and the military chaplaincy continues to be an area of concern.

The Government provides partial funding for religious instruction in public schools and churches for children belonging to any of the 12 officially recognized religions. The Government does not offer such funding to nonrecognized religious groups. A minimum of three children is required to form a class. In some cases, officially recognized religions decide that the administrative cost of providing religious instruction is too great to warrant providing such courses in all schools. Unless students age 14 and over (or their parents for children under age 14) formally withdraw from religious instruction (if offered in their religion) at the beginning of the academic year, attendance is mandatory.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the 12 officially recognized religious groups are generally amicable. Fourteen Christian churches, among them the Roman Catholic Church, various Protestant confessions, and eight Orthodox and old-oriental churches are engaged in a dialog in the framework of the so-called "Ecumenical Council of Austrian Churches." The Baptists and the Salvation Army have observer status in the Council. The international Catholic organization "Pro Oriente," which promotes a dialog with the Orthodox churches, also is active in the country.

The Austrian Roman Catholic Church traditionally has been active in fostering amicable relations and promoting a dialog among the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic communities. The international Catholic group "Pax Christi," which pursues international interreligious understanding with projects involving Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, has a chapter in the country.

There were no reports of violence or vigilante action against members of religious minorities. However, there is widespread societal mistrust and discrimination against members of some nonrecognized religious groups, particularly against those considered to be members of sects. A large portion of the public perceive such groups as exploiting the vulnerable for monetary gain, recruiting and brainwashing youth, promoting antidemocratic ideologies, and denying the legitimacy of government authority. Societal discrimination against sects is, at least in part, fostered by the Government (see Section II).

The English-speaking United Methodist Church of Austria reported no incidents of discrimination during the period covered by this report.

Muslims have complained about societal discrimination. In upper Austria, a controversy over a mosque in Traun received widespread press coverage. The mosque was demolished by authorities in March 2001, who cited building code violations. Members of the Muslim community alleged that the violations were only a pretext for authorities. They have reported problems in obtaining a new site for their religious services and believe that this is an attempt to encourage Muslims, most of whom are immigrants, to leave the area. The National Organization of Muslims in Austria has not intervened on behalf of the community in Traun.

Sensitivity to the practice of Scientology in the country remains high. The Church of Scientology has reported problems in opening bank accounts, now resolved, and obtaining credit cards. Individual Scientologists have experienced discrimination in hiring. In June 2000, a singer who previously was affiliated with the Church of Scientology was harassed at his performances. Police fined the demonstrators and offered police protection to the singer. In October 1999, Austria Telekom transferred a computer specialist from a sensitive position in an emergency-phone-line coordination office to a comparable but nonsensitive position due to concerns over his access to sensitive information.

Following the inclusion of the FPÖ in the Government, there were incidents involving members of various religious groups. In February 2000, the head of the Lutheran Church in Burgenland was subjected to hate mail and threats after she spoke out against intolerance and xenophobia. In 2000 the leader of the country's Jewish community also reported that several members of the community were subjected to verbal and written threats after taking a stand against racism and xenophobia.

According to the Interior Ministry's 2000 annual report on rightwing extremism, there was a decrease in the number of complaints of anti-Semitic incidents. Com-

pared with 1999, the number of complaints decreased by 40 percent, from 15 to 9 complaints.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

In September 2000, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted resolution HR 588, criticizing the country, among others, because of "conscious propaganda against religious minorities."

The U.S. Embassy monitors the Government's adherence to religious tolerance and freedom of expression as part of its evaluation of the Government's policies and commitments to freedom of expression.

The Ambassador regularly meets with religious and political leaders to reinforce the U.S. Government's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance and to discuss the concerns of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) and religious communities regarding the Government's policies towards religion. In March 2001, the U.S. Government issued a statement that strongly criticized Joerg Haider's verbal attack against the leader of the country's Jewish community. In July 2000, the Ambassador met with the Minister for Social Security and Generations to stress U.S. views on the problems inherent in the country's laws on religion as well as the work of its Office on Sects. The Ambassador previously had discussed the same issue with the Chancellor. Other officials at the Embassy maintain close contact with political leaders and members of the various religious communities. The Embassy's Public Affairs Office highlights religious freedom and tolerance in the majority of its programs.

AZERBAIJAN

The Constitution provides that persons of all faiths may choose and practice their religion without restrictions, and the Government generally respected these rights for most citizens; however, there were some abuses and restrictions.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Following President Aliyev's public statements on religious freedom in November 1999, the Government's respect for religious freedom improved in late 1999 and much of 2000; however, some problems continued. Religious groups reported delays in and denials of registration. The authorities interfered in the importation of religious literature. Low-level officials at times harassed nontraditional religious organizations.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, reaction in recent years to evangelical activity on behalf of religious faiths new to the country has run contrary to its tradition of tolerance. There is widespread popular hostility towards groups that proselytize (largely evangelical Christians, but also Muslim missionary groups), and towards Muslims who convert to other faiths.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. During the period covered by this report, the Embassy maintained a wide variety of religious contacts and addressed issues of concern with the Government's Religious Affairs Department, its successor agency the State Committee for Work with Religious Structures (SCWRS), and other government officials.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

According to official figures the country has a total area of 33,774 square miles and its population is approximately 8 million persons. The population is approximately 90 percent Muslim, 3 percent Christian, and less than 1 percent Jewish. The rest of the population adheres to other faiths or consists of nonbelievers. Among the Muslim majority, religious observance is relatively low, and Muslim identity tends to be based more on culture and ethnicity than religion. The Muslim population is approximately 60 percent Shi'a and 40 percent Sunni; differences do not appear to be defined sharply, and those Shi'a and Sunni Muslims who are observant intermingle freely on religious occasions. The vast majority of the country's Christians are Russian Orthodox whose identity, like that of Muslims, tends to be based as much on culture and ethnicity as religion. Christians are concentrated in the urban areas of Baku and Sumgait. Most of the country's Jews belong to one of two groups: The "Mountain" Jews are descendents of Jews who sought refuge in the northern

part of the country more than 2,000 years ago, and a smaller group of “European” Jews are descendants of Jews who migrated to the country during Russian and Soviet rule.

These four groups (Shi’a, Sunni, Russian Orthodox, and Jewish) are considered “traditional” religious groups. There also have been small congregations of Evangelical Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, and Baha’is in the country for more than 100 years. In the last 10 years, a number of new religious groups that are considered “foreign” or “nontraditional” have been established. These include “Wahhabist” Muslims, Pentecostals, evangelical Christians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Hare Krishnas. Religious leaders may not engage in political activities and their facilities may not be used for political purposes.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides that persons of all faiths may choose and practice their religion without restrictions, and the Government generally respects these rights for most citizens; however, there were some abuses and restrictions. Under the Law on Religious Freedom, each person has the right to choose and change his or her own religious affiliation, including atheism, to join or form the religious group of his choice, and to practice his or her religion. The State generally is prohibited expressly from interfering in the religious activities of any individual or group; however, there are exceptions, including cases where the activity of a religious group “threatens public order and stability.”

A number of legal provisions enable the Government to regulate religious activity, including a requirement in the Law on Religion that all religious organizations be registered by the Government in order to function legally. Throughout most of the period covered by this report, registration was accomplished by obtaining approval from the Religious Affairs Department, subordinated to the Cabinet of Ministers, and then applying for formal registration with the Ministry of Justice. Following the liquidation of the Department in June 2001, registration of all religious groups was halted temporarily, while the government reorganized its procedures for overseeing religious organizations.

Registration enables a religious organization to maintain a bank account, rent property, and generally act as a legal entity. Lack of registration makes it more difficult, but not impossible, for a religious group to function. The process is burdensome and there are frequent, lengthy delays in obtaining registration for religious and nonreligious groups. Religious groups are permitted to appeal registration denials to the courts. Following a number of attacks against unregistered, nontraditional religious groups in late 1999, President Heydar Aliyev spoke publicly and in detail about the government’s commitment to religious freedom. As a result, a number of groups with long-pending registration applications were registered. These included Pentecostal and Baptist churches, as well as Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Law on Religious Freedom also subordinates all Islamic religious organizations to the Azerbaijan-based Spiritual Directorate of Caucasus Muslims. Another provision in the Law on Religious Freedom permits the production and dissemination of religious literature after approval is received from the Religious Affairs Department and with the agreement of local government authorities; however, the authorities also appeared selectively to restrict individuals from importing and distributing religious materials.

Officials other than the President issued public statements in support of religious freedom and tolerance. For example, in May 2001, Speaker of the Parliament Murtuz Aleskerov encouraged acceptance of citizens who had converted to Christianity. In October 2000, the Constitutional Court hosted a conference on religious freedom, which was attended by senior religious authorities as well as foreign and domestic specialists on religion.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The acting Chairman of the Religious Affairs Department and other lower-level and local government officials continued to restrict religious activity by some foreign and nontraditional groups. The key concerns relate to the Government’s authority to register religious groups to oversee the import and production of religious literature and to restrict what it regards as political activity carried out under the guise of religion.

By the end of the period covered by this report, several religious groups continued to report that they had not been registered. These included Azerbaijani Presbyterian, Living Stones, New Life, and Baptist congregations from the towns of Aliabad, Sumgait, and Neftchala. In late 2000, two congregations, the nondenomina-

tional Baku Christian Fellowship and a branch of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, were denied registration by the Religious Affairs Department and the Ministry of Justice. In both cases, the reasons for denial appeared to have no basis in the law and contradicted the President's 1999 commitment to religious freedom. The authorities also appeared selectively to restrict individuals from importing and distributing religious materials. In September 2000, customs authorities held up a shipment of religious materials destined for the shop allegedly because the owner "did not have a right to import such books into the country." Half of these books eventually were released. The government has taken action against a number of Islamic figures (including foreigners) and organizations that it believes to have engaged in illegal political and terrorist activities.

Three religious groups in Baku continued to seek the return of places of worship seized during the Soviet period. These were the city's European (Ashkenazi) synagogue, the Lutheran church and a Baptist church. Government authorities reportedly are resisting return of these properties.

There were no repetitions during the period covered by this report of earlier instances in which officials or those allied with the Government used veiled anti-Semitic comments against perceived opponents for politically motivated reasons.

Press reports indicate that in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region, a predominantly ethnic Armenian area over which the authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan have no control, the Armenian Apostolic Church enjoys a special status. Courses in religion are mandatory in Nagorno-Karabakh schools and local officials frequently underline their commitment to supporting the church, which is the oldest Armenian national institution. This status also results in serious restrictions on the activities of other confessions, mostly various Christian groups. The region's military atmosphere has led to hostility toward Jehovah's Witnesses, whose beliefs prohibit the bearing of arms.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Sporadic violations of religious freedom by some officials continued. In many instances, abuses by officials reflected the popular prejudice against conversion to Christianity and other nontraditional religions. For example, local authorities in the Zagatala region (in the northwest of the country) denied a newborn boy a birth certificate for several months before finally issuing one, allegedly because his parents were members of the local Baptist church and had given their son a "non-Azeri" name. Services at a legally registered Baptist church in Baku were reportedly under routine surveillance by local police. When a police officer was seen attending a service, he was fired from his job. Later, police questioned the church's pastor and members of the congregation about their activities and employment.

There have been isolated instances of harassment of religious groups by local officials. The most prominent of these is the harassment of the legally registered evangelical Greater Grace Church. Since December 2000, the local pastor and several members of the Greater Grace Church in Ismayli repeatedly have been detained and questioned by local police, apparently at the instigation of local Muslim authorities. This harassment persisted through April 2001, when the pastor and several members of the church were detained while on a picnic in the countryside. Two members of the congregation were arrested and sentenced to 7 days' imprisonment for disobeying police orders. One was released prior to serving his full sentence due to poor health. In May 2001, Greater Grace services at a private apartment in Sumgait were interrupted by local authorities who demanded to see congregants' identification papers. The police took a key to the apartment, as well as several samples of Christian literature, video cassettes, and music. Although services resumed without interference the following week, local authorities were reviewing the Church's right to continue using the apartment for services at the end of the period covered by this report.

Government authorities took various actions during the reporting period to restrict what they claimed were political and terrorist activities by Iranian and other clerics operating independently of the organized Muslim community. The Government outlawed several Islamic humanitarian organizations because of credible reports about connections to terrorist activities. The Government also deported foreign Muslim clerics it suspected of engaging in political activities.

In September 1999, at the instigation of a local security official, the management of a state factory near Baku subjected six employees to public humiliation then fired them because they had become Jehovah's Witnesses. Following President Aliyev's November 1999 reaffirmation of religious freedom, the employees were reinstated with back pay. In an April 2001 letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Tolerance, a senior Jehovah's Witness official applauded the Government for its tolerant attitude towards Jehovah's Witnesses since that time.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there is widespread popular antipathy towards groups that proselytize (largely evangelical Christians, but also Muslim missionary groups), and towards Muslims who convert to other faiths. Azerbaijani Muslims who convert to non-Muslim faiths are considered alien by some of the religious traditions.

Religious proselytizing by foreigners is against the law, and there is vocal opposition to it. During a March 2001 opposition Civil Solidarity Party press conference, participants claimed that missionary activity undermined the country's morals and that certain missionaries operated in the political interests of Western countries. An article published in a local daily in February 2001 criticized Western pressure on religious issues and the President's decision to register nontraditional evangelical faiths in late 1999. Russian Orthodox Church officials publicly blamed nontraditional Christian faiths for promoting discord between Christians and Muslims in the country.

In June 2001, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) became the subject of several negative press reports on independent television stations. These reports accused both the Adventist church and ADRA of religious proselytism in the country. Local Muslim leaders and government officials were featured warning such agencies that they should be closed. The press also accused the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) in Baku, of supporting religious groups after the ICRC distributed a publication that some believed recognized the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh as independent. The ICRC—a purely secular organization—immediately and publicly refuted the accusations about supporting religious groups.

Hostility also exists toward foreign (mostly Iranian and "Wahhabist") Muslim missionary activity, which in part is viewed as seeking to spread political Islam and thus as a threat to stability and civil peace.

Hostility between Armenians and Azeris, intensified by the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, continues to be strong. In those portions of the country controlled by Armenians, all ethnic Azerbaijanis have fled and those mosques that have not been destroyed are not functioning. Animosity toward ethnic Armenians elsewhere in the country forced most ethnic Armenians to depart, and all Armenian churches, many of which were damaged in ethnic riots that took place over a decade ago, remain closed. As a consequence, the estimated 10,000 to 30,000 ethnic Armenians who remain in the country are unable to attend their traditional places of worship.

Prominent members of the Russian Orthodox and Jewish communities report that there are no societal restrictions on their freedom to worship.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Ambassador and embassy officers maintain close contacts with senior Muslim and other religious authorities from a wide variety of religious groups. The Embassy helped organize a conference on religious freedom hosted by the Constitutional Court in October 2000. Attendees included the Ambassador and a visiting U.S. Congressional counsel on religious freedom who later met with government officials and religious groups to discuss recent developments. The Embassy communicated its concerns about reported violations of the Law on Religion to officers in the Department of Religious Affairs, its successor agency, Parliament, and the Presidential Administration. In January 2001, embassy officers traveled to Ismayli to meet with members of the Greater Grace Church and local authorities following reports of harassment. The Embassy remained in close contact with various church members and government authorities to urge compliance with the country's commitments to religious freedom. In April 2001, the Ambassador met with the President's senior adviser on religious issues to underscore the U.S. government's interest in religious freedom and to encourage continued implementation of the president's policy. The Embassy continued to raise concerns with government officials, particularly regarding actions taken by local police, security, and other authorities. The Embassy also has worked

on a regular basis with religious groups and the President's Office to resolve issues related to registrations and the import of religious literature.

BELARUS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the regime restricts this right in practice.

The status of respect for religious freedom continued to worsen during the period covered by this report. Head of State Alexander Lukashenka has pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church, currently the country's majority religion, and the authorities have increased harassment of other denominations and religions. Some of these, including many Protestant denominations, the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (BOAC), and some eastern religions, repeatedly have been denied registration by the regime. Without registration, many of these groups find it difficult, if not impossible, to rent or purchase property to conduct religious services. The authorities continued to enforce a 1995 Cabinet of Ministers decree that restricts the activities of religious workers in an attempt to protect Russian Orthodoxy and curtail the growth of evangelical religions. Some Protestant denominations have been the subject of judicial action by the regime for allowing foreigners to preach in their churches. Despite continued harassment, some minority faiths have been able to function if they maintain a low profile.

There are, for the most part, amicable relations among registered, traditional religious communities; however, societal anti-Semitism persisted, and sentiment critical of minority faiths increased.

The U.S. Government discussed with the regime the poor human rights situation in the country and raised problems of religious freedom during such discussions. US Embassy officials also discussed specific cases with the Government.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 76,810 square miles, and its population is 9,990,000.

Sustained repression of the once majority Greek Catholic population under the Russian and Soviet empires, persecution of the Roman Catholic Church during the same period, and Soviet repression of much of the Russian Orthodox clergy have radically altered the natural religious landscape and turned the Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate into the majority church in the country. Furthermore, seven decades of religious repression under the Soviet regime have resulted in a culture that is largely secular in orientation. According to one opinion poll taken during 1998, less than half of the population believes in God. At the same time, approximately 60 percent identify for cultural or historical reasons with the Russian Orthodox Church. The State Committee on Religious and National Affairs (SCRNA) indicates that approximately 80 percent of all persons who profess a religious faith belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. Approximately 15 to 20 percent of the population are estimated to be either practicing Roman Catholics or identify themselves with the Roman Catholic Church (the second largest religious grouping). The current number of persons identifying themselves as Jews is between 60,000 and 80,000 persons. There are a number of Protestants and adherents to the Greek Rite Catholic Church. Other minority religious faiths include, but are not limited to, the following: Seventh-Day Adventist, Old Believer, Muslim (the Supreme Administration of Muslims, abolished in 1939, was reestablished in early 1994), Jehovah's Witnesses, Apostolic Christian, Calvinist, and Lutheran.

The country was designated an Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1989, thereby creating the Belarusian Orthodox Church. Patriarchal Exarch Filaret celebrated his 20th anniversary as head of the Orthodox community on October 24, 1998. Under Filaret's leadership, the number of Orthodox parishes throughout the country has grown to 1,172 as of January 1, 2001.

Situated between Poland and Russia, the country historically has been an area of interaction, as well as competition and conflict, between Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Cardinal Kazmierz Swiatek, Archbishop of the Minsk-Mogilev Archdiocese, heads the approximately 400 Roman Catholic parishes. The Roman Catholic presence traditionally has been stronger in areas under Polish influence; however, the ethnic Polish community, currently numbering at least 400,000 persons, does not account for the total number of Roman Catholics. Although Roman Catholic parishes can be found throughout the country, most Roman Catholics reside in areas located in the west and north, near the border with Poland and Lith-

uania. This concentration is due in part to the more thorough suppression of the Roman Catholic Church in eastern oblasts in imperial and Soviet times. Sensitive to the dangers of the Roman Catholic Church being viewed as a “foreign” church or as a political threat, Cardinal Swiatek, who himself spent 10 years in a Soviet labor camp, has tried to keep the Church out of the country’s internal political problems. Although the Cardinal has prohibited the display of Polish national symbols in churches and encouraged the use of Belarusian, rather than Polish, in church services, some priests continued to conduct services in Polish.

It is estimated that approximately 120,000 citizens were considered to have Jewish “nationality” near the end of the Soviet period in 1989, compared to between 60,000 and 80,000 at the end of the period covered by this report. At least half of the present Jewish population is thought to live in or near the capital city of Minsk. A majority of the country’s Jews are not actively religious. Of those who are, most are believed to be either Reform or Conservative. There is also a small but active Lubavitch-run Orthodox synagogue in Minsk.

Adherents of Protestant faiths, although representing a relatively small percentage of the population, are growing in number. Since 1990 the number of Protestant congregations, registered and unregistered, has more than doubled and now totals over 1,000, according to state and independent sources. Protestant faiths, although historically small in comparison with Orthodoxy, have been active in the country for hundreds of years. During the Soviet period, a number of Protestant faiths were placed forcibly under the administrative umbrella of a joint Pentecostal-Baptist organization. The two largest Protestant groups are registered under separate Pentecostal and Baptist unions. A significant number of Protestant churches, including charismatic and Pentecostal groups remain unregistered.

There are a number of congregations of the Greek Rite Catholic Church, which was once the majority religion. The Greek Catholic Church was established in the 16th century and once had a membership of approximately three-quarters of the population, until it was banned by the Russian Government in 1839 and severely persecuted in the 1860’s and again in 1946. Following the 1991 reestablishment of Belarusian independence, the attempt to revive the Church, which maintains Orthodox rituals but is in the communion with the Vatican, has met with only limited success. The Lukashenka regime treats the Greek Catholic Church with disfavor because of its emphasis on the use of the Belarusian language as well as historical tensions between the Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the regime restricts this right in practice. Although Article 16 of the 1996 amended Constitution—which resulted from an illegal referendum used by Lukashenka to broaden his powers—reaffirms the equality of religions and denominations before the law, it also contains restrictive language that stipulates that cooperation between the State and religious organizations “is regulated with regard for their influence on the formation of spiritual, cultural, and country traditions of the Belarusian people.”

Since his election as the country’s President in July 1994, Lukashenka, who has called himself an “Orthodox atheist,” has pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church as the country’s chief religion and harassing other non-Russian Orthodox denominations and religions. In December 1999, Lukashenka asserted that politicians and the head of state bear responsibility for preserving Christian values, for maintaining religious peace in society, and for harmonious cooperation between the state and the Church. Lukashenka also called for the church to be more active in promoting the unity of Slavic nations because Slavic integration is in the interests of both the State and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The State Committee on Religious and National Affairs (SCRNA), which was established in January 1997, categorizes religions and denominations. Some are viewed as “traditional,” including Russian Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam (as practiced by a small community of ethnic Tatars with roots in the country dating back to the 11th century); some are viewed as “nontraditional,” including some Protestant and other faiths; and some are viewed as “sects,” including eastern religions and other faiths. The authorities deny permission to register legally at the national level to some faiths considered to be “nontraditional,” and to all considered to be “sects.” The SCRNA claims that 26 religious denominations are registered officially; however, the significance of this figure is uncertain. Some congregations are registered only on a local basis, which entails only limited rights. Only congregations registered nationally are allowed to invite foreign religious workers and open new churches. While all registered religious organizations enjoy

tax-exempt status, government subsidies appear limited to the Russian Orthodox Church. Government employees are not required to take any kind of religious oath or practice elements of a particular faith.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Since his election as the country's President in July 1994, Lukashenka, who has called himself an "Orthodox atheist," has pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church as the country's chief religion and harassing other non-Russian Orthodox denominations and religions. The authorities encourage a greater role for the Russian Orthodox Church, largely as part of an overall strategy to strengthen "Slavic unity" in the region and promote greater political unification between Belarus and Russia. Lukashenka grants the Russian Orthodox Church special financial advantages that other denominations do not enjoy and has declared the preservation and development of Russian Orthodox Christianity a "moral necessity." On April 30, 2000, Lukashenka said on state radio that "nobody will disturb our Orthodoxy" and pledged that the State "will do everything for the Church to be a pillar of support for our state in the future." In 1998 Lukashenka pledged state assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church and stressed that Orthodoxy would remain the "main religion." Following a \$100,000 donation to the Russian Orthodox Church in January 2001, Lukashenka was awarded the prize of the Unity of Slavic Peoples by Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Aleksiy II, for his efforts to defend Russian Orthodoxy. In a public meeting with members of the Parliament's human rights committee in May 2001, Russian Orthodox Archbishop of Mogilev and Mstislavl Maksim publicly called for a new law on religion that would protect the "dominant" status of the Russian Orthodox Church in the country, introduce religious education in secondary schools, and ban the spread of "non-traditional" denominations. Valery Lipkin, chairman of the committee, asserted the new law would ban the spread of "destructive sects" in the country.

The authorities deny permission to register legally at the national level to some faiths considered to be "nontraditional," and to all considered to be "sects." The authorities assert that they deny some groups permission to register as religious organizations because their activities "run counter to the Constitution." With or without official registration, some religious faiths have great difficulty renting or purchasing property in which to establish places of worship, in building churches (e.g., the Greek Catholics, sometimes disparaged as "Uniates") or in openly training clergy. Police have disrupted some services or religious meetings, which were being conducted peacefully in private homes when held by religious groups that have not been able to register.

The authorities continued to refuse to register the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (BOAC). Local courts have refused to hear appeals made by the BOAC, to overturn the authorities' decision not to register their churches. The BOAC is unable to train a sufficient number of priests to meet the growing needs of its parishioners in its 70 parishes because of ongoing registration problems, including the inability to register a seminary.

A number of Protestant faiths are refused registration because they do not have a legal address; however, they are refused property that could qualify as a legal address because they are not registered. The Full Gospel Pentecostal churches regularly are refused registration in this way. According to independent estimates, as many as 70 percent of Protestant churches have been denied registration, have lost their registration in a recent government-imposed reregistration exercise, or have not attempted to register. Article 272 of the Civil Code states that property may only be used for religious services once it has been converted from residential use; however, the authorities decline to issue permits for such conversions to unregistered religions. Religious groups that cannot register often are forced to meet illegally or in the homes of individual members. Several charismatic and Pentecostal churches have been evicted from property they were renting because they were not registered as religious organizations. A number of "nontraditional" Protestant and other faiths have not attempted to register because they do not believe that their applications will be approved.

In 1998 SCRNA official Vyacheslav Savitskiy asserted that "11 destructive religious organizations, which have been denied registration after expert examination are confirmed as functioning in the country. In April 1999, a conference organized by the Russian Orthodox Church and Lukashenka's National Assembly discussed the need to introduce legislation to combat "destructive sects" that operate illegally. On April 12, 2001, the official newspaper of the armed forces, *Vo Slavu Rodinu*, published an article that listed 74 "destructive sects," including many eastern religions, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses, and urged all military personnel to avoid such organizations.

On June 16, 2000, Minsk city authorities banned an annual Catholic procession in the center of Minsk commemorating the feast of Corpus Christi. The march, which regularly attracted up to 5,000 participants, had been held annually since 1991. A second appeal by the organizers also was denied. The denial of the march was considered by many human rights observers to be part of a larger crackdown on non-Orthodox religious groups.

Citizens theoretically are not prohibited from proselytizing; however, while individuals may speak freely about their religious beliefs, the authorities have intervened to prevent, interfere with, or punish individuals who proselytize on behalf of an unregistered religion. For example, the regime continued to enforce a July 1995 Council of Ministers decree that regulates the activities of religious workers in an attempt to protect Russian Orthodoxy and prevent the growth of evangelical religions. A 1997 Council of Ministers directive prohibits teaching religion at youth camps. In February 1999, the Council of Ministers passed Decree No. 280, which expanded upon these earlier regulations. The decree appears to stipulate, among other things, that among foreign religious workers, only male clergy may engage in religious work upon invitation from a religious organization already officially registered, a provision that could be invoked to prohibit female religious clergy, such as Roman Catholic nuns, from engaging in religious activity. However, this provision has not been tested in the courts.

Foreigners generally are prohibited from preaching or heading churches that the authorities view as “nontraditional faiths” or “sects,” which include Protestant groups. Foreign missionaries may not engage in religious activities outside the institutions that invited them. One-year validity, multiple-entry “spiritual activities” visas, which are required officially of foreign missionaries, can be difficult to obtain, even for faiths that are registered with the authorities and have a long history in the country. Foreign clergy or religious workers who do not register with the authorities or who have tried to preach without government approval or without an invitation from, and the permission of, a registered religious organization, have been expelled from the country. Approval often involves a lengthy bureaucratic process. In November 2000, a pastor of a Protestant church in Brest was warned and later fined by city authorities for allowing a foreigner to preach at a church conference.

In April 2000, the Council of Ministers changed the regulations to allow internal affairs agencies to expel foreign clergymen from the country by not extending their registration or by denying them temporary stay permits. Under the new regulations, these authorities are allowed to make decisions on expulsion on their own or based on recommendations from Religious Affairs Councils, regional executive committees, or from the Religious Affairs Department of the Executive Committee of the city of Minsk. There is no provision for appeal to judicial bodies. In April 2001, relying on these new regulations, Minsk city authorities refused to extend the registration of the foreign pastor of a Pentecostal church.

The regime increased its efforts to curb the role of foreign clergymen during the period covered by this report. In March 2001, the regime approved additional changes to the regulations governing invitations to foreign clergy and the activities of foreign clergy in the country. Under the new regulations, representatives of foreign religious organizations can only be invited upon agreement with the SCRNA, even if their visit is for nonreligious purposes, such as charitable activities. The inviting organization must make a written request to invite foreign clergy, including the dates and reason for the visit. The SCRNA has 20 days in which to respond and there is no provision for appeal of the SCRNA’s decision. In April 2001, the regime enacted changes to the civil code to restrict “subversive activities” by foreign organizations in the country. A new clause prohibits the establishment of offices of foreign organizations, “the activities of which are aimed at . . . the inciting of national, religious and racial enmity, as well as activities which can have negative effects on the physical and mental health of the people.” Most human rights monitors believe that the current regime could interpret the clause to restrict further, or deny altogether, activities of foreign religious organizations or their Belarusian associates.

As a result of its revival since 1991, the Roman Catholic Church has experienced a shortage of qualified native clergy. At times the Church has had difficulty getting permission from government authorities to bring in a sufficient number of foreign religious workers, mostly from Poland, to make up for the shortage. After a long delay, the Lukashenka regime has given permission to the Catholic Church to open a seminary in Pinsk in September 2001. The regime indicated that, in light of this development, foreign priests no longer would be allowed to work in the country. However, this change may not be enforced at the local level, and at least some foreign priests still are allowed to work in the country. Bishops must receive permission from the SCRNA before transferring a foreign priest to another parish.

Restitution of religious property remained limited during the period covered by this report. There is no legal basis for restitution of property that was seized during the Soviet and Nazi occupations, and legislation restricts the restitution of property that is currently being used for cultural or educational purposes. Many former synagogues in Minsk are used as theaters, museums, sports complexes, and even a German-owned beer hall; the Jewish community's requests to have these synagogues returned has been refused. The few returns of property to religious communities have been on an individual and inconsistent basis, and local government authorities in general are reluctant to cooperate. Over the past several years, the Jewish community has lobbied the authorities successfully to return several properties in Minsk and other cities; however, most properties have not been returned. The Russian Orthodox Church appears to have had the most success on the issue of property restitution.

Regime officials took a number of actions that indicated hostility or insensitivity toward the Jewish community. The authorities have done little to counter the spread of anti-Semitic literature. For example, in March 2000, a Minsk court dismissed a complaint filed by Jewish organizations against the Orthodox Initiative (a state owned publishing company) for publishing an anti-Semitic book, "The War According to Mean Laws, which, among other anti-Semitic writings, included the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and blamed Jews for societal and economic problems in the country. The judge in the case declared that the book contained "scientific information" and, therefore, was not within the jurisdiction of the court. In May 2000, a Minsk city court refused to hear the Jewish organizations appeal and the book remains on sale at the main Orthodox Church bookstore and other state-run bookstores. In December 2001, a Minsk synagogue was fire bombed; and no discernible effort has been made by the authorities to find those responsible for the incident (see Section III). As in previous years, authorities attempted to prohibit the distribution of matzoh for Passover among members of the Jewish community. In April 2001, local Jewish charity organizations also had difficulty distributing matzoh for Passover. The Committee on Humanitarian Aid stated that the matzoh could not be considered humanitarian aid, but their decision was overturned at the last minute and Jewish charity organizations were able to distribute a limited amount of matzoh in time for Passover.

Officially sanctioned state newspaper and state television attacks on minority faiths increased in frequency during the period covered by this report. For example, on August 5, 2000, *Narodnaya Gazeta*, a state-owned and published newspaper, carried an article with the headline "The Prospect Looms for Belarus to become a Protestant republic." Among other allegations, the article stated that Protestant groups engage in "fanatical rituals," including the ritual use of human blood and human sacrifice. The article claimed that these groups threaten Russian Orthodox priests with physical violence and present a threat to the country, its psychological health, and its security. The article also called on the authorities to take steps to protect Russian Orthodoxy. Appeals to the SCRNA by Protestant leaders to halt distribution of the article were unsuccessful. The author, Nina Yanovich, as well as *Narodnaya Gazeta* journalists Nina Chaika and Mikhail Shimansky, who also authored articles hostile to other minority faiths, later were given honorary awards by Orthodox Church Metropolitan Filaret for their articles defending the Russian Orthodox Church. A series of state television documentaries, entitled "Expansion," targeted Protestants, especially Pentecostals, and Catholics as destructive groups that engage in fanatical rituals and pose a threat to society. In March and April 2001, another series shown on state television accused Protestant churches of engaging in human sacrifices, poisoning children, and other "destructive rituals." In the series, SCRNA officials claimed that Protestant groups were undermining the authority of the regime, were agents of the West, and needed to be banned from the country. Efforts by Catholic and Protestant groups to halt these broadcasts were rejected by SCRNA authorities and the courts.

There were no reports of restrictions on the importation of religious literature. However, there were repeated instances of authorities preventing the distribution of religious literature, through holding or seizures of the materials.

A practitioner of a "nontraditional" faith, especially one not permitted to register, could be at a disadvantage in regard to advancement within the government bureaucracy or the state-owned sector of the economy.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In July 2000, security forces twice raided the Parish of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (BOAC) in the village of Pogranichniki, near Grodno, for conducting religious services without registration. On July 27, 2000, security forces arrested BOAC priest Ivan Spasyuk on charges of conducting services

without a permit. He later was sentenced to 5 days' imprisonment for allegedly resisting arrest. On May 21, 2001, authorities again arrested Spasyuk while he was attempting to hold a service in the village of Radaulyany (Berestavitsky district). Authorities then summoned Spasyuk and his wife to a local court where, in a closed hearing and without the ability to call witnesses or obtain legal assistance, Spasyuk was detained and then fined for petty hooliganism.

In May 2001, 20 members of a messianic Jewish group were detained in Minsk while they were attempting to distribute religious literature. Also, in May 2001, the organization attempted to hang posters in central Minsk congratulating veterans of World War II on victory day. While attempting to hang posters, police under orders from the city department of the SCRNA, detained members of the group. The SCRNA informed the group that "it would be offensive for veterans to receive congratulations from the Jews." The group was detained for several hours and then released. Several members of the group had some of their property confiscated.

There were other reports of the detention of members of Protestant religious groups, usually for several hours, for distribution of unregistered religious materials.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are, for the most part, amicable relations among the registered, traditional, religious communities; however, societal anti-Semitism persisted and sentiment critical of minority faiths rose during the period covered by this report.

There have been some instances of vandalism that appeared related to societal anti-Semitism. There was a noticeable lack of government action in response to them. For example, on December 27, 2000, unidentified assailants threw firebombs at a synagogue in Minsk. A security guard was able to extinguish the fire before serious damage occurred. No progress was reported on the investigation of the incident by the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of arrests in the April 1999 or December 2000 arson attacks on local Minsk synagogues or in a number of cases of desecration of Jewish cemeteries from previous years. According to the Anti-Defamation League and the World Jewish Congress, there are a number of small ultra-nationalist organizations on the fringes of society, and a number of newspapers regularly print anti-Semitic material. One of these newspapers *Slavianskaia Gazeta*, although distributed locally, reportedly was published in Moscow. The State Committee on the Press issued an official warning in June 1999 to the local newspaper *Lichnost* for anti-Semitic articles. Anti-Semitic material from Russia also circulates widely.

Many in the Jewish community remain concerned that the Lukashenka regime's plans to promote greater unity with Russia may be accompanied by political appeals to groups in Russia that tolerate or promote anti-Semitism. Lukashenka's calls for "Slavic solidarity" were well received and supported by anti-Semitic, neo-Fascist organizations in Russia. For example, the organization Russian National Unity (a neo-fascist, antiforeign, antiminority faith group) has an active local branch and its literature is distributed in public places in Minsk. The concept of a "greater Slavic union," the leadership of which Lukashenka seeks, is a source of concern to the Jewish community given the nature of support that it engenders.

There have been constant attacks on Protestant groups during this reporting period.

The country's small Muslim community, with roots dating to the Middle Ages, does not report significant societal prejudice. While in the past there was at least one report of vandalism of a mosque, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report.

On April 22, 1999, during a religious conference held in Minsk Patriarchal Exarch Filaret stated that the Orthodox Church does not seek the role of interconfessional leader or to become a state-run church. However, he stressed that the Orthodox Church would cooperate only with religious faiths that have "historical roots" in the country. Filaret also remarked that he was against the "invasion of those foreign religions that corrupt souls." In a May 2001 speech to the All Belarussian People's Congress, Filaret called for the authorities to cooperate with the Russian Orthodox Church to protect the "spiritual security" of the people, and to limit the presence of "destructive and pseudo-Christian societies that destroy the spiritual, social, and cultural unity of the people."

Most local human rights nongovernmental organizations do not focus significant resources on religious freedom concerns.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has raised problems of religious freedom with the authorities in the context of frequent demarches on the poor human rights situation in the country. In July 2000, following the arrest of BOAC priest Spasyuk, representatives of the Embassy met with government officials to press for his release and to urge authorities to respect the rights of BOAC parishioners to gather and worship. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy have had frequent contacts with leaders and members of religious communities throughout the period covered by this report, and have worked with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) representatives to promote religious freedom.

Officials of the U.S. Department of State met on a number of occasions with representatives of the Government of Belarus in Washington, D.C. to support respect for religious freedom and to address other human rights concerns.

BELGIUM

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government took action against groups that it considers "harmful sects."

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 free practice of religion.

There are generally amicable relations among different religious groups in society; however, several religious groups complain of discrimination, particularly groups which have not been accorded official "recognized" status by the Government and those associated primarily with immigrant communities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 11,800 square miles and its population is approximately 10.3 million.

The population is predominantly Roman Catholic. Approximately 75 percent of the population belong to the Catholic Church. The Muslim population numbers approximately 350,000, 90 percent of which are Sunni. Protestants number between 90,000 and 100,000. Greek and Russian Orthodox churches have approximately 100,000 adherents. The Jewish population is about 40,000, and the Anglican Church has approximately 21,000 members. In addition to the recognized faiths, the largest nonrecognized religions are Jehovah's Witnesses, with approximately 27,000 baptized members, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), with approximately 3,000 members. Unofficial estimates indicate that approximately 10 percent of the population does not identify with any religion.

According to a 1999 survey by an independent academic group, only 11.2 percent of the population attend weekly religious services. However, religion does still play a role in major life events—65 percent of the children born in Belgium are baptized; 49.2 percent of couples opt for a religious marriage; and 76.6 percent of funerals include religious services.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The Government accords "recognized" status to Roman Catholicism, Protestantism (including Evangelicals), Judaism, Anglicanism, Islam, and Orthodox Christianity (Greek and Russian), and these religions receive subsidies from government revenues. The Government also supports the freedom to participate in nonreligious philosophical organizations. These secular humanist groups (or "laics") serve as a seventh recognized "religion" and their organizing body, the Central Council of Non-Religious Philosophical Communities of Belgium, receives funds and benefits similar to those of the six other recognized religions. According to the Government, the non-

confessional philosophical organizations have 350,000 members. However, the laics claim 1.5 million members.

By law, each recognized religion has the right to provide teachers at government expense for religious instruction in schools. The Government also pays the salaries, retirement, and lodging costs of ministers and subsidizes the construction and renovation of church buildings for recognized religions. The ecclesiastical administrations of recognized religions have legal rights and obligations, and the municipality in which they are located must pay any debts that they incur. Some subsidies are the responsibility of the federal government while the regional and municipal governments pay others. According to an independent academic review, government at all levels spent \$523 million (23 billion Belgian francs) on subsidies for recognized religions in 2000. Of that amount, 79.2 percent went to the Catholic Church, 13 percent to secular humanist groups, 3.5 percent to Muslims, 3.2 percent to Protestants, 0.6 percent to Jews, 0.4 percent to Orthodox Christians, and 0.1 percent to Anglicans. Taxpayers who object to contributing to these subsidies have no legal recourse.

The Government applies the following five criteria in deciding whether or not to grant recognition to a religious group: 1) the religion must have a structure or hierarchy; 2) the group must have a sufficient number of members; 3) the religion must have existed in the country for a long period of time; 4) it must offer a social value to the public; and 5) the religion must abide by the laws of the State and respect public order. The five criteria are not listed in decrees or laws. The law does not further define "sufficient," "a long period of time," or "social value." A religious group seeking official recognition applies to the Ministry of Justice, which then conducts a thorough review before recommending approval or rejection. Final approval of recognized status is the sole responsibility of the Parliament but in practice the Parliament generally accepts the decision of the Ministry of Justice. A group whose application is refused by the Ministry of Justice may appeal the decision to the Council of State.

The lack of recognized status does not prevent religious groups from practicing freely. Nonrecognized groups do not qualify for government subsidies but can qualify for tax-exempt status as nonprofit organizations.

In 1999 the Federal Synod of Protestant and Evangelical Churches in Belgium (a group of evangelical Christian organizations) claimed discrimination based on the Government's refusal to grant it recognized status separate from the recognized Protestant group. The Government insisted that its decision was consistent with its treatment of other groups such as Islam and Orthodox Christianity in which different branches are represented by a single Executive Council. In late 2000, the Ministry of Justice facilitated discussions between the Evangelical group and the recognized Protestant group, which resolved the dispute by including Evangelical representatives on the existing Protestant Executive Council.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In response to a number of highly publicized mass suicides in France, Switzerland, and Canada by members of the Solar Temple cult (including some Belgian citizens) in the mid-1990's, the Parliament in 1996 established a special commission to examine the potential dangers that sects may represent to society, especially children, and to recommend policies to deal with those dangers. The parliamentary commission released its report in 1997. It divided sects into two broadly defined categories. The report defined the first category of sects as "organized groups of individuals espousing the same doctrine within a religion." The commission considered sects in this sense to be respectable and to reflect the normal exercise of freedom of religion and assembly provided for by fundamental rights. The second category, "harmful sectarian organizations," are defined as groups having or claiming to have a philosophical or religious purpose whose organization or practice involves illegal or injurious activities, harms individuals or society, or impairs human dignity. Attached to the report was a list of 189 sectarian organizations that were mentioned during testimony before the commission (including groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Church of Scientology, and even the Young Women's Christian Association). Although the introduction to the list clearly stated that there was no intent to characterize any of the groups as "dangerous," the list quickly became known in the press and to the public as the "dangerous sects" list. The Parliament eventually adopted several of the report's recommendations but it never adopted the list itself.

Some religious groups included in the 1997 parliamentary list continue to complain that their inclusion has resulted in discriminatory action against them. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses has been holding its annual convention at the Brussels Exhibition Center since 1935. In March 2001, church officials received a letter notifying them that they could not use that facility for their 2001 meeting. The re-

jection letter specifically mentioned the appearance of Jehovah's Witnesses on the parliamentary list as reason for the refusal.

In May 1998, to implement one of the report's recommendations, Parliament passed legislation creating a "Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations." The Center opened its offices in September 2000. The Center collects open source information on a wide range of religious and philosophical groups and provides upon request information and advice to the public regarding the legal rights of freedom of association, freedom of privacy, and freedom of religion. The Center's library is open to the public and contains information on religion in general as well as on specific religious groups. The library also includes publications provided by various religious organizations including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and other religious groups. The Center is authorized to propose policy or legislation to the Government on the problem of sects; however, it is not authorized to provide assessments of individual sectarian organizations to the general public.

The law creating the Center stipulates that the harmful nature of a sectarian group is to be evaluated in reference to principles contained in the Constitution, orders, laws, decrees, and in international human rights instruments ratified by the Government. The Center is required by law to publish a report on its activities every 2 years. The first report is expected to be released in the fall of 2001.

Parliament implemented another of the report's recommendations, when it passed legislation in October 1998 creating an interagency body that works in conjunction with the Center to coordinate government policy on sects. This interagency coordination group, which includes representatives from law enforcement agencies as well as a number of government ministries, held its first meeting in October 2000 and now meets on a quarterly basis. A subgroup of law enforcement officials meets bi-monthly to exchange information on sect activities. Most law enforcement agencies have an official specifically assigned to deal with sect issues. The Government also has designated one national magistrate in the District Court of First Instance and one local magistrate in each of the 27 judicial districts to monitor cases involving sects.

The parliamentary report also recommended that the country's municipal governments sponsor information campaigns to educate the public, especially children, about the phenomenon of harmful sects. In December 1998, Parliament enacted legislation formally charging the country's State Security with the duty of monitoring harmful sectarian organizations as potential threats to the internal security of the country. This legislation uses the same language as the Parliamentary Commission's report and defines "harmful sectarian organizations" as any religious or philosophical group that, through its organization or practices, engages in activities that are illegal, injurious, or harmful to individuals or society.

Some courts in the Flanders region continue to stipulate, in the context of child custody proceedings and as a condition of granting visitation rights, that a noncustodial parent who is a member of Jehovah's Witnesses may not expose his or her children to the teachings or lifestyle of that religious group during visits. These courts have claimed that such exposure would be harmful to the child; however, other courts have not imposed this restriction.

Some recognized religions complain of incidents of religious discrimination. The Muslim Executive Council reported that women and girls wearing traditional dress or headscarves in some cases face discrimination in employment and public and private school admissions even though the law does not prohibit such dress.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools; however, students are not required to attend religion classes. Public school religion teachers are nominated by a committee from their religious group and appointed by the Minister of Education. All public schools have a teacher for each of the six recognized religions. A seventh choice, a nonconfessional course, is available if the child does not wish a religious course. Private Catholic schools receive government subsidies for working expenses and teacher salaries.

On September 30, 1999, police raided offices and homes of members of the Church of Scientology and seized computers and documents belonging to the Church, including parishioners' confidential spiritual counseling folders. At the end of the period covered by this report, no arrests or prosecutions had resulted from this raid. A second, smaller raid on the Church of Scientology's Brussels headquarters took place on February 8, 2001 at which time additional documents were seized. Most of the seized computer equipment has been returned to the Church but the documents are still held by the investigating magistrate. The Government has refused to provide additional information on the case since it is still under investigation. The Church of Scientology has stated that the Government's seizure of its computers, materials, and files impedes its ability to practice freely. The Church of Scientology took legal

action in 2001 to obtain its documents and has filed a complaint claiming that the Prosecutor's Office provided prejudicial statements to the press in violation of the country's secrecy laws regarding investigations. On March 6, 2001, the Church of Scientology filed a formal complaint against the Government with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

In April 2000, the Belgian Consulate in Los Angeles refused to issue visas for missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) to enter the country for missionary work. Similar visas had been processed for decades without problems. The Government explained that this change in policy was an unintended result of the Foreign Worker's Act of 1999 that required religious workers to obtain work permits before applying for a visa to enter the country for religious work. However, the Act specifically exempted workers for the six recognized religions from this requirement. Mormon missionaries were told that they should reapply for visas after obtaining the appropriate work permits. However, since Mormon missionaries are strictly volunteers who pay their own way and receive no salary or subsidy from the Church, they do not qualify for the required work permit. Negotiations between representatives of the Mormons and the Ministry of Interior, facilitated by the U.S. Embassy, led to a resumption of the issuance of visas in July 2000 under special temporary procedures. Visas are now being issued on a regular basis, although at a much slower pace than in the past. The Government still has not devised a permanent solution for the problem.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among different religions groups in society; however, several religious groups complain of discrimination, particularly groups which have not been accorded official "recognized" status by the Government and those associated primarily with immigrant communities.

At the national level, there is an annual general assembly of the National Ecumenical Commission to discuss various religious themes. The Catholic Church sponsors working groups at the national level to maintain dialog and promote tolerance among all religious groups. At the local level, every Catholic diocese has established commissions for interfaith dialog.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed the issue of religious freedom throughout the period covered by this report with officials from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Interior, as well as with Members of Parliament. There is an ongoing dialog between the Embassy and the Ministry of Justice at the cabinet level regarding the implementation of recommendations of the 1997 parliamentary report on sectarian organizations. Embassy officials also met regularly with the Director of the Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations and closely monitored the Center's activities. Embassy officials continued to monitor the Government's progress toward implementing a permanent solution to the Mormon visa problem.

Officers from the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom visited the country in October 2000 to discuss religious freedom with representatives of various religious groups, nongovernmental organizations, and the Government. The visit reinforced U.S. Government concerns that policies that appear to target some religious groups may become institutionalized and could have the effect of appearing to justify restrictive laws in other countries.

Embassy officials met with representatives of both recognized and nonrecognized religions that reported some form of discrimination during the period covered by this report.

The Embassy Public Affairs Office, through the International Visitors Program, sponsored a tour of the United States for the President of the Muslim Executive Council to discuss religious freedom and religious tolerance issues with American religious leaders and academics.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The State Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entity Constitutions of both the Federation and the Republika Srpska (RS) provide for freedom of religion, and individuals generally enjoy this right in areas that are ethnically mixed or where they are adherents of the majority religion. However, despite constitutional protections, the ability of individuals to worship in areas where theirs is a minority faith was restricted, sometimes violently.

Respect for religious freedom did not change overall during the period covered by this report, but the increased number of refugees returning to areas in which they constitute a religious minority suggested increased confidence among refugees that their religion and culture would be respected. On the other hand, these returns provoked a reaction by ethnic nationalists in some areas, who at times met the returnees' efforts to follow their faith with violence.

Religious intolerance in the country directly reflects ethnic intolerance because the identification of ethnicity with religious background is so close as to be virtually indistinguishable. In some communities, local religious figures contributed to intolerance and an increase in nationalist feeling through public statements and, on occasion, in sermons. In addition, increasing refugee returns and the resulting growth in ethnic/religious minorities, combined with sustained pressure from the international community on nationalist political parties, led to severe tension and several violent incidents during the first half of 2001. Minority religious believers, clerics, and properties associated with them sometimes became targets.

The U.S. Government sought to encourage leaders from all three major religious communities to play a more supportive role in promoting a multiethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. Strong U.S. Government support for full implementation of the Dayton Accords, refugee returns, and politically moderate, multiethnic, government is intended, over time, to improve respect for religious freedom in the country.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two entities, the Federation and the Republika Srpska (RS). The country has a total area of 19,781 square miles and its population is approximately 3.4 million.

Reliable statistics on the numbers of believers of different faiths are unavailable. However, ethnic groups are identified with distinct religions or religious/cultural traditions. The three largest are: Bosniaks, who are generally Muslim or of Muslim background (46 percent); Serbs, who are generally Serbian Orthodox or of Orthodox background (31 percent); and Croats, who are generally Roman Catholic or of Catholic background (14 percent). There are also small numbers of Romani and Jews. Protestants and other religious groups constitute a very small part of the population. Missionary activity is limited.

Ethnic cleansing during the 1992–95 war caused forced internal migration which almost completely segregated the population into separate ethnic/religious areas. Despite the increasing return of refugees, the majority of Serbian Orthodox adherents still live in the RS, and the majority of Muslims and Catholics still live in the Federation. Within the Federation, distinct Muslim and Catholic majority areas remain.

While the practice of religion is low among all groups, it reportedly is increasing among the young and is likely an expression of increased identification with their ethnic heritage. Religious practice is reportedly highest among Croats in the Herzegovina region.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for religious freedom; however, free exercise of this right is often denied to minorities, particularly in the RS and some areas of Herzegovina.

While the majority of the population of the Federation consists of Bosniaks and Croats, neither Islam nor Catholicism enjoys special status under the Federation Constitution. In July 2000 the Bosnian Constitutional Court struck down a provision in the RS Constitution directing the State to "materially support the Orthodox Church and cooperate with it in all fields." However, constitutional changes required by the decision have not yet been implemented.

The leaders of the Muslim, Catholic, Serbian Orthodox, and Jewish communities jointly presented a draft law that would define the legal status of religious organiza-

tions, including property rights. The draft law also grants a right to property restitution “in accordance with the law,” but no such law has been established. Some international observers believe that a legal framework that accords equal status to all religious communities would decrease the dependence of religious leaders on the political process. However, the draft law has not yet been introduced in the State Parliament.

On May 10, 2000, the Education Ministers of both entities and the Deputy Federation Education Minister agreed on a standard curriculum, which requires all schools to teach the shared cultural heritage of all three communities. Government and religious leaders in the RS agreed in May 2000 that RS public schools would offer classes in all religions beginning in September 2001. However, this agreement has not yet been implemented.

Parties dominated by a single ethnic group remain powerful in the country, particularly in Serb and Croat-dominated areas. These parties have identified themselves closely with the religion associated with their predominant ethnic group. Some clerics have characterized hardline nationalist political sympathies as part of “true” religious practice. Many political party leaders are former Communists who have adopted the characteristics of ethnicity, including religion, to strengthen their credibility with voters.

However, the nationalists lost power in the Federation and in the State governments as a result of the November 2000 general elections. Following the elections, the multiethnic Social Democratic Party, the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and several smaller parties formed the Alliance for Change coalition now in control of the Federation and State governments. However, the Bosniak Party for Democratic Action (SDA) (which continues to be identified as a nationalist party) and the Croat-nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) remain powerful, particularly in areas where nationalist politicians can more easily prey on the fears of the population. The nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS) remained ideologically committed to Serb cultural and religious authority in the territory of the RS, where it won a significant plurality in the November 2000 elections. While the Party for Democratic Progress (PDP) of RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic is relatively moderate, it is heavily dependent on the SDS in order to remain in office.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In certain cases, local officials have blocked the return of minority religious leaders by using administrative obstacles. For example, on June 4, 2001, the Islamic community, in consultation with the international community, agreed to abandon a plan to lay the cornerstone at the central mosque in Stolac. Instead, a fence will be placed around the site for the time being. The mayor of Croat-dominated Stolac recently denied permission for the Islamic community to reconstruct the mosque, which stood near the center of the city. The mayor claimed that the Catholic Church had requested permission to reconstruct a church that was on the site before the mosque. In light of these “competing claims” the mayor stated that the site should be turned into a park. RS authorities frequently delay or deny building permits for reconstruction of religious buildings destroyed during the 1992–95 war. For example, the mayor of Trebinje has hinted that further information, gathered from archaeological studies of the site of the Oman Pasha mosque (see Section III), destroyed during the war, could prevent reconstruction. The Islamic Community also has requested permission to rebuild a number of other destroyed mosques in the RS, but has received permission only in a few cases where a large number of Bosniaks have returned and are the only residents of villages that were deserted after the war. The Catholic Church reports that local authorities in Pecnik are threatening to demolish a Catholic church currently being rebuilt because the work is being done without a building permit. In December 2000, the Human Rights Chamber concluded that local authorities in Bijelina prevented reconstruction of five mosques that were destroyed in 1993 and allowed buildings to be constructed on two of the former mosque sites, a parking lot on one, and flea markets on the remaining two. RS authorities ignored an order by the Chamber in 1999 to halt construction on one site. The Chamber ordered that permits be granted for reconstruction of the five mosques. No action by the authorities was taken by the end of the period covered by this report.

In the Federation, Ivan Mandic, a Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ) hard-liner and the head of Mostar Municipality Southwest (MSW), refused to grant permission in December 2000 for reconstruction of Baba Besir Mosque, one of three mosques in MSW that were destroyed during the war.

In August 1998, the municipal government of Prnjavor, in the RS, ordered a Bosniak to move his deceased wife’s remains from the Muslim cemetery to a “new” Muslim cemetery. The municipal authorities claimed that the Muslim cemetery in

which the deceased had been buried was closed. At a February 1999 Human Rights Chamber hearing concerning the case, evidence indicated that there was in fact no “new” Muslim cemetery in the area and that no reasonable grounds existed for closing the old Muslim cemetery (nearby Catholic and Orthodox cemeteries remained open). In February 2000, the Human Rights Chamber determined that the municipal government of Prnjavor had discriminated against the Islamic community by closing the cemetery. Prnjavor municipal authorities were ordered to allow burials within a month. As of June 30, 2001, Prnjavor authorities had not complied with the order.

All three major religious groups and the Jewish community have claims to property confiscated during World War II, the Communist period, or the 1992–95 war. While the Federation and the RS legislatures have passed laws on restitution of property, the High Representative has suspended action on both until an economically acceptable restitution plan is developed. Currently, municipal and canton authorities have broad discretion regarding disposition of contested property that was nationalized under the Communist government. Many use this as a tool of political patronage, rendering religious leaders dependent on politicians to regain lost property.

Public schools offer religious education classes. In theory, these classes are optional. However, in some areas, children who do not choose religion classes are subject to pressure and discrimination from peers and teachers. In many areas, schools do not hire teachers to offer religious education classes to students of minority religions. Sarajevo Canton’s public schools tend to offer only Islamic religion classes. In Croat-majority West Mostar minority students theoretically have the right to take classes in non-Catholic religions; however, this option reportedly does not exist in practice. Orthodox symbols are present in public schools throughout the RS.

An estimated 1.2 million citizens remained internally displaced persons (IDP’s) or refugees abroad as a result of the 1992–95 war. Virtually all of them had fled areas where their ethnic/religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

The RS government, local governments, and police forces frequently allowed or encouraged an atmosphere in which abuses of religious freedom can take place. For example, during the violent riots by Serb demonstrators to prevent reconstruction of mosques in Trebinje and Banja Luka, local authorities failed to intervene to stop violent attacks on bystanders including elderly people, high-ranking government officials, and representatives of the international community (see Section III). The absence of a police force willing to protect religious minorities and a judicial system willing to prosecute crimes against them are major obstacles to safeguarding the rights of religious minorities. While new officers are accepted into the police academies under strictly observed ethnic quotas, it will take years of concentrated effort to establish effective, professional multiethnic police forces throughout 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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

A significant number of citizens remained IDP’s or refugees abroad as a result of the 1992–95 war. Virtually all had fled areas where their ethnic/religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war. However, both organized and spontaneous returns significantly increased during the period covered by this report.

In some cases the returns are directly associated with increasing religious pluralism. In the RS, reconstruction has been completed on five mosques that were destroyed during the war. All of the completed mosques are in areas with large numbers of Bosniak returnees. Three of the reconstructed mosques are in two small villages in the Prijedor municipality, two in Kozarac, and one in Kozars. Before the war, there were several mosques in the town of Prijedor. Unfortunately, Prijedor city authorities continue to refuse permission to reconstruct any of the mosques that were located within the city limits; however, reconstruction of a Catholic church is near completion. In other parts of the RS, the Islamic community has been able to reconstruct one destroyed mosque in the village of Jelic, Foca municipality, and one in Zvornik municipality.

In Bosniak-dominated Gradina, Konjic municipality, the Islamic community has voluntarily decided to remove a mosque constructed by the army during the war because the mosque is partially located on Serb-owned land.

On April 24, 2001, the foundation stone for a new synagogue was laid in Mostar. The synagogue will form part of a future Jewish Cultural Center. The Muslim and Croat members of the State Presidency attended the ceremony.

An Orthodox prayer is no longer offered at the beginning of Republika Srpska National Assembly (RSNA) sessions. When a new RSNA is sworn into office, each deputy may choose a religious oath according to his or her own religious tradition or a nonreligious civil oath. When the new RSNA was sworn in following the November 2000 general elections, the Orthodox Church marked the occasion with a service in a nearby church, not in the RSNA building.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Until the 19th century, most Bosnians identified themselves by religious affiliation. With the rise of Balkan nationalism in the 19th century, Bosnians came to identify themselves in ethnic, as well as religious terms. This tendency increased during the Communist era when the regime discouraged religious affiliation. Under the Communists, most Bosnians identified themselves by ethnic group, or simply as "Yugoslavs." Since the country's independence, there have continued to be Bosnians who decline to accept either ethnic or religious identification and consider themselves simply as "Bosnians."

The 1992–95 war in Bosnia was not a religious conflict as such. However, the association of ethnicity and religion is so close that the bitterness engendered by the war and the 270,000 deaths it caused has contributed to mutual suspicion among members of all three major religious groups.

Despite the constitutional provisions for religious freedom, a degree of discrimination against minorities occurs in virtually all parts of the country. Discrimination is significantly worse in the RS, particularly in the eastern RS, and in Croat-dominated areas of the Federation. However, incidents of discrimination occurred in Bosniak-majority areas as well. During the period covered by this report, Catholic cemeteries were vandalized in Tuzla and Tesanj in Bosniak-majority areas of the Federation and in Lukavac and Bosanski Brod in the RS. Catholic Church officials also reported the following incidents in the RS. On August 9, 2000, a hand grenade was thrown at a church in Zaslavica, Bosanski Samac county. On September 9, 2000, in Donji Kladari the words "This is Serbia" were written on the wall of a Catholic church. Finally, on December 16, 2000, a parish priest was attacked in Turic, Gradacac county.

While Sarajevo, the Bosniak-majority capital of the country, has preserved in part its traditional role as a multiethnic city, instances of discrimination continue to occur there, especially in education. Attacks against Orthodox and Catholic clerics and religious edifices have occurred in Sarajevo. On May 28, 2001, a Muslim woman walking with her husband and children physically and verbally assaulted a Catholic nun in central Sarajevo. On June 3, 2001, a group of Muslim youths harassed Catholic seminary students in front of the Catholic cathedral in central Sarajevo.

Throughout the country, religious minorities felt pressure and were intimidated by the ethnic/religious majorities in their regions. Numerous buildings belonging to the Islamic, Serbian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communities were damaged or destroyed during the 1992–1995 war, usually in a deliberate attempt at ethnic intimidation. Among the religious buildings destroyed during the war were 618 mosques in the territory of the RS. Efforts to rebuild the destroyed Oman Pasha Mosque in Trebinje and the Ferhadija Central Mosque in Banja Luka resulted in violent riots in those cities in early May 2001. The violence started on May 5, 2001 in Trebinje when an estimated 1,500 Serb demonstrators attacked Islamic clerics and believers, international community representatives, and Federation government officials who had gathered to mark the laying of the cornerstone for reconstruction of the Oman Pasha Mosque. A number of people were beaten and injured while local authorities and police looked on and failed to intervene. On May 6, 2001, a grenade was thrown at the house of the leader of Trebinje's Muslim community. On May 9, 2001, the RS Interior Minister dismissed Trebinje police chief Jovo Cokoril. Local police officers arrested four persons in connection with an attack on the Office of the High Representative special envoy, and six other persons were arrested on other charges related to the riot. However, the Banja Luka court handed down extremely light sentences to those arrested. The RS Government released a statement expressing regret about the riot; however, the statement stressed that the reconstruction of religious buildings is being used for political purposes and is "causing tension" in the RS.

On May 7, 2001, an estimated 2,000 to 5,000 Serb demonstrators violently disrupted a similar ceremony on the site of the destroyed Ferhadija Central Mosque in Banja Luka. The mosque, deliberately destroyed by Serb nationalists during the war, had become a symbol of the ravages of ethnic cleansing, and efforts to rebuild it were politically sensitive. Before the ceremony could begin, about 200 protesters broke through police lines and violently attacked participants including elderly people, high-ranking government officials, and representatives of the international community. Violent Serb protesters trapped over 300 people in a building on the site owned by the Islamic community for about 8 hours until RS police were able to evacuate them. Protestors attacked the building with stones and removed Islamic symbols from the building. About 30 people were injured during the riot, including a Muslim man from Cazin, who died from his wounds on May 26, 2001. Protestors also burned Bosniak-owned businesses and destroyed the Bosnian Foreign Minister's car and several buses.

In the Banja Luka riots, RS government officials belatedly attempted to defuse the situation and the local police acted to safely evacuate the people trapped at the site, but they did not do so immediately. Some police officers reportedly joined the demonstrators. In the aftermath of the riots, RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic publicly accepted responsibility on behalf of the RS government for failure to ensure security. The Joint State Presidency strongly condemned RS authorities as "unprepared and incompetent in providing the respect of basic human rights and the freedom of religious confessions." Five senior RS police officers were suspended after the riots, and Interior Minister Ivica Bundalo resigned. However, on May 30, 2001 the RSNA adopted a report blaming the Islamic community and the international community for creating a situation, by seeking to rebuild destroyed mosques, which was likely to cause violent demonstrations. In a May 8, 2001 statement, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia President Vojislav Kostunica exacerbated the tensions when he, while condemning the violence, questioned whether the mosque should be rebuilt. RS leaders have suggested that the presence of international community figures and the use of Islamic symbols and music were provocative.

On June 18, 2001, Islamic community leaders finally were able to lay the cornerstone of the Ferhadija mosque. The RS government ordered a large security operation for the event. RS police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse hundreds of demonstrators, who sang nationalist songs and chanted anti-Muslim slogans to protest the ceremony.

Scattered reprisals by Bosniaks in the Federation to the violence in Banja Luka typify the problem of religious freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Religious buildings, clerics, and individual believers in any area where they are a minority bear the brunt of retaliation for discrimination and violence perpetrated by other members of their religious/ethnic groups in areas where they are the majority. Because they are powerful symbols of religious identification and, therefore, ethnicity, clerics, and religious buildings are favored targets. Most religious leaders condemn violence and nationalism, but their message is undermined by other clerics who continue to support nationalist causes and separatism.

Serb Orthodox buildings and believers in Bosniak-dominated areas were targeted in the days following the riots in the RS. In contrast to events in the RS, protests in Bosniak majority areas against events in Trebinje and Banja Luka were well-organized and usually peaceful. However, there were some violent acts, a number of them directed against buildings of the Serb Orthodox Church, the primary symbol of the Serb ethnic group. On May 8, 2001, two Bosniaks threw a hand grenade at a Serb Orthodox Church in the Bosniak-dominated town of Sanski Most. The windows of a nearby cafe owned by a Serb were also smashed. Local police detained two Bosniak men in connection with the incidents. Also on May 8, a group of displaced Bosniaks originally from the RS refused to allow a group of displaced Serbs, originally from Sarajevo, to enter the Osjek cemetery in Ilidza, a suburb of Sarajevo that was predominantly Serb before the war. On May 9, 2001, about 20 Bosniaks stoned a house inhabited by Serbs in Sarajevo. Local police responded immediately to the attack, but no arrests have been made. Also on May 9, 2001, 11 tombstones in an Orthodox cemetery in Tuzla were desecrated and the cemetery chapel vandalized. Three Bosniak juveniles were arrested and charged in the case and local government officials condemned the vandalism. On May 25, 2001, a large group of Bosniaks stoned the houses of two Serb returnees in Bosniak-dominated Bocinja. In Croat-dominated Glamoc, Serb returnees' houses and the Orthodox Monastery Veselinje were shot with automatic weapons. Police have no suspects in the case.

In May 2001, leaflets were distributed in Dobojo, in the RS, calling on Muslims to leave the city and urging Serbs to protest against the reconstruction of the city's mosque.

Leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities have committed themselves publicly to building a durable peace and national reconciliation. The leaders of these four communities are members of the Interreligious Affairs Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operates with the active involvement of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and OHR facilitate interfaith meetings at the local level as well. On June 8, 2001 in Rome, the Catholic conflict resolution group Sant'Egidio hosted a conference on religious reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities sent representatives to the conference, which released a joint statement supporting reconstruction of all religious sites in the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government supports the return of refugees, democratization, and protection of human rights throughout the country. The U.S. Government also encourages leaders from all major religious communities to promote a multiethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. The U.S. Government provides financial support to the Human Rights Chamber, which hears cases on religious discrimination. The Ambassador frequently meets with the principal religious leaders, individually and collectively, to urge them to work toward moderation and multiethnicity. In addition, the Embassy publicly condemns instances of religious discrimination and attacks against religious communities or buildings, and encourages leaders from all ethnic groups and members of the international community publicly oppose such attacks. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides funding to train lawyers and judges concerning human rights, including religious freedom.

BULGARIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice for some non-Orthodox religious groups. These restrictions are manifested primarily in a registration process that is selective, slow, and nontransparent. The Government prohibits the public practice of religion by groups that are not registered.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In contrast to earlier practice, there were no reported instances during the period covered by this report of any direct government, police, or societal harassment against religious workers or worshippers during the practice or propagation of their faith. The Parliament refrained from enacting a proposed draft law regulating religious denominations, which had created serious religious freedom concerns. However, there was a trend during the period covered by this report toward the enactment of new ordinances in a number of cities (including Burgas, Pleven, and Stara Zagora) aimed at severely curtailing religious freedom rights.

Relations between the major religious communities generally were amicable; however, public opinion and periodic media articles continued to suggest a somewhat hostile and alarmist attitude toward nontraditional religious groups, although there were fewer manifestations of this sentiment than in earlier years.

The U.S. Government has raised the issue of religious freedom repeatedly in contacts with government officials and Members of Parliament. The Ambassador and other embassy officers periodically have urged the Government to expedite registration of church groups, and on numerous occasions pointed out problems with several aspects of the proposed law on religion previously under discussion in the Parliament.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 42,855 square miles and its population is approximately 8.3 million. Official census statistics from December 1992, the latest available, indicate that almost 86 percent of citizens are Orthodox Christians, 9.5 percent are Muslim, 1 percent are Catholic, and most of the remainder belong to a variety of Protestant faiths. The country's Jewish community, with only a few thousand persons, constitutes less than 1 percent of the population and generally is well accepted and integrated into society. Some observers believe that this census lists a disproportionately high number of members of the Orthodox Church, in part because many essentially nonreligious or antireligious persons reportedly were list-

ed as Orthodox by default. Muslim leaders claim that their adherents constitute up to 20 percent of the population.

Some religious minorities are concentrated geographically. The Rhodope Mountains (along the country's southern border with Greece) are home to many Muslims, including ethnic Turks, Roma, and Pomaks (descendants of Slavic Bulgarians who converted to Islam centuries ago under Ottoman rule). At the western extreme of the Rhodopes, there are greater numbers of Pomaks, and on the eastern end, more ethnic Turks. Muslim ethnic Turks and Roma also live in large numbers in the northeast of the country, primarily in and around the cities of Shumen and Razgrad, as well as along the Black Sea coast. There are comparatively large numbers of Roman Catholics in Plovdiv, Assenovgrad, and in cities along the Danube River. Eastern Rite Catholic communities are located in Sofia and Smolyan. Many members of the country's small Jewish community live in Sofia, Ruse, and along the Black Sea coast. However, Protestant groups are dispersed more widely throughout the country. While clear statistics are not available, evangelical Protestant church groups have had particular success in attracting numerous converts from among the ethnic Roma minority, and these churches tend to be the most active denominations in predominantly Roma-inhabited areas.

Although no exact data are available on attendance levels, most observers agree that evangelical Protestants tend to participate in religious services more frequently than other religious groups. Members of the country's Catholic community also are regarded as more likely than members of other faiths to regularly attend religious services.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice for some non-Orthodox religious groups.

The Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the "traditional" religion. The Government provides financial support for the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as for several other religious communities perceived as holding historic places in society, such as the Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths. These groups generally benefit from a relatively high degree of governmental and societal tolerance.

For most registered religious groups there were no restrictions on attendance at religious services or on private religious instruction. Four Islamic schools (including a university-level Muslim divinity school), a Muslim cultural center, a multi-denominational Protestant seminary, university theological faculties, and religious primary schools operated freely. Bibles and other religious materials in the Bulgarian language were imported or printed freely, and Muslim, Catholic, and Jewish publications were published regularly.

The Ministry of Education has cooperated with the country's Chief Mufti to initiate a pilot program of optional Islamic education classes in primary schools. In Sliven, classes with children willing to study Islam for 1 hour per week were formed in 5 villages; 130 children participated. The children used a textbook proposed by the Chief Mufti and approved by the Ministry of Education. If the pilot program is successful, the program purportedly would be made more broadly available in the school system. The classes are conducted in Bulgarian and are paid for by the Office of the Chief Mufti.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government restricted religious freedom through its registration process that is selective, slow, and nontransparent. The Government prohibits the public practice of religion by groups that are not registered.

The Government generally has encouraged greater religious tolerance since early 1998 by generally seeking to promote greater understanding among different faiths. However, while the observance of religious freedom has improved for some nontraditional groups, other groups have faced official disfavor and been disadvantaged by the Government's persistent refusal to grant registration. Other church groups have obtained registration from the national Government, but continued to face some discrimination and antipathy from many local governments. The national Government has on some occasions, but not systematically, stopped local governments from enforcing restrictive municipal government decisions, which appear to fall into a gray area of the law. Burgas, Plovdiv, and Stara Zagora are among the municipalities that have reported the greatest number of complaints of harassment of nontraditional religious groups. Some observers note with concern a tendency by certain municipalities to enact preemptively regulations that may be used to limit religious

freedom if a perceived need arises. For example, a regulation passed by Sofia municipality in February 1999 forbids references to miracles and healing during religious services, a provision that many fear may be employed as a pretext to ban or interrupt services by charismatic evangelical groups. The regulation cites a Communist-era law dating from 1949, which is technically still in effect, and which forbids foreigners from proselytizing and administering religious services in the country. Other municipalities have enacted similar regulations. The 1949 law also has been criticized as an outmoded potential impediment to free religious activity. However, despite the law's continued technical validity, foreign missionaries can and do receive permission to proselytize.

The legal requirement that groups whose activities have a religious element must register with the Council of Ministers remained an obstacle to the activity of some religious groups, such as the Unification Church, the Sofia Church of Christ, and the Church of the Nazarene (which has tried repeatedly to register for over 6 years). Furthermore, several municipal governments including those of Burgas, Plovdiv, Pleven, Gorna Oryahovitsa, and Stara Zagora have, within the period covered by this report, established local registration requirements and/or adopted other restrictive laws curtailing the free practice of religious activities, often in contravention of the country's constitution and international law. These laws, variously, have imposed bans on such things as distribution of religious literature, proselytizing in public, references to faith-healing, preaching to minors without parents' express permission, and holding of prayer services at facilities not registered with the municipal authorities. Some municipal ordinances have also imposed intrusive financial reporting requirements that apply specifically to church organizations. It is not yet clear, however, if all of these new provisions are being actively enforced by local authorities. By the end of the period covered by this report, the local registration requirements were suspended by the governors of the regions where they were passed, and legal proceedings were initiated to formally invalidate the requirements. Despite these new institutional and procedural barriers, there were no reported incidents during the period covered by this report of street-level harassment of religious groups by the authorities, as was seen in previous years.

Parliament deliberated extensively during the year on a proposed new law regulating religious organizations. The various proposals, including the final version adopted by the relevant committee, contained numerous provisions and ambiguous passages of serious potential concern, and would have given the Government a controlling role in overseeing the activities of religious groups. Final action on the draft bill was deferred pending a review and comment from the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe's commentary criticized numerous aspects of the draft law and the parliamentary term ended without a final vote on the bill (See Section IV).

In July and August 2000, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) encountered a number of politically inspired legal and administrative obstacles at the local and regional levels to its efforts to build a new church and administrative center in Plovdiv. One political party in particular, which has several seats on the city council in Plovdiv, led protest marches as well as filed several administrative challenges to the construction. Ultimately with the support of the local mayor, the building was completed.

A government licensing commission denied without explanation approval for a new nondenominational Christian radio station "Glas Nadezhda" ("Voice of Hope"), despite the support of the Government's Directorate of Religious Affairs. Several sources reported that the unofficial position of commission members was that non-Orthodox Christian groups should not be allowed to have a radio station, at least until the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has one of its own. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church gave no indication of any interest or intent to establish a radio station.

In April 2001, officials of the Studentski Grad district of Sofia refused to allow the showing of a documentary-style film on the life of Jesus, after written application was made for the screening. Notwithstanding regulations that prescribe a written reply, the official simply advised organizers that he would not allow such a film to be shown in his district at Easter time. Also in April 2001, Nova Zagora city officials likewise refused permission for the showing of the film on the life of Jesus, asserting that the film violated the tenets of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

There were several incidents of harassment of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses by police and local authorities in recent years. For example, in July 1999, police in Stara Zagora interrupted a Mormon church service, demanded that worshippers produce their identity documents, and recorded the names and identification numbers of everyone present. They also required that church leaders present registration papers and a contract for the use of the building, which the church representatives did not have with them. The police alleged that the Mormon church was not registered properly with the city authorities.

On July 15, 1999, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses was required to pay approximately \$250 (500 leva) because of his participation in a June 1998 Bible study meeting in Plovdiv, which was deemed unlawful because Jehovah's Witnesses was an unregistered denomination. Jehovah's Witnesses alleges that the accused man and his lawyer were not present for the hearing at which the fine was imposed because the venue was changed without notice, and they therefore arrived 5 minutes late for the proceedings. Two other members of Jehovah's Witnesses who have been ordered to pay approximately \$250 (500 leva) fines for similar offenses still await a final determination on their cases.

In December 1999, police in Pernik interrupted a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses. The police examined and recorded the identity documents of those present, and warned that such meetings should not be held in the future. The group was cited for violation of a city ordinance.

In March 2000, two members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Turgovishte were detained briefly by police and charged with disruption of public order under a city ordinance because of their public proselytizing.

In April 2000, several Mormon missionaries in Plovdiv were challenged by police while distributing literature and were required to go to the police station. They were charged with distributing brochures without a license.

In April 2000, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses was refused entry into the country by border police, reportedly on the grounds that she had been deported from the country in 1997 for practicing her then-unregistered faith.

A number of religious groups have complained that foreign-national missionaries and religious leaders experience difficulties in obtaining and renewing residence visas in the country; the issuance of residence visas appears to be subject to the whim of individual authorities. New amendments to the Law on Foreign Persons, which went into effect on May 1, 2001, have created problems for foreign national missionaries and religious workers in Bulgaria. The revised law has no visa category which explicitly applies to missionaries or religious workers, and rules for other categories of temporary residence visa (such as self-employed or business-owner) have been tightened in ways that seem to make it more difficult for religious workers to qualify. This problem has been exacerbated by the fact that key government institutions have not yet developed implementing regulations or procedures to handle their new responsibilities under the law, despite the fact that the new law is in force.

The Ministry of Education initiated a course on religion in the high school curriculum beginning with the 1998/1999 school year. The original plan called for a world religion course that avoided endorsing any particular faith; however, members of other religions, especially ethnic Turkish Muslims, maintain that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church receives privileged coverage in the textbooks. The religion course is optional and is not available at all schools. Optional Islamic education classes in primary schools are being conducted on a pilot basis.

At the Department of Theology of Sofia University all students are required to present an Orthodox Church baptismal certificate, and married students must present an Orthodox marriage certificate, in order to enroll in the Department's classes. These requirements make it impossible for non-Orthodox students to enroll in the Department.

The Government has abolished the construction and transportation battalions, to which ethnic and religious minorities previously were assigned in order to segregate them from the regular military forces. The conscript troops of the military are now integrated; however, the professional officer corps contains few members of ethnic or religious minority groups.

Several court decisions have been handed down in the March 1999 case of the Gabrovo schoolteacher who claimed she was forced to leave her position because of her Pentecostal Christian faith. In June 2000, she won a ruling that expunged a letter of reprimand from her personnel record after the court ruled that the reprimand was improper, and she was awarded a modest compensation. In July 2000, an appeals court upheld a lower court ruling that rejected the schoolteacher's libel charge against several media outlets for coverage she considered defamatory in describing the circumstances under which she resigned. An appeal remains pending before the Supreme Court of Cassation. In September 2000, she lost the case in which she alleged that she was forced to resign under duress, for lack of evidence to support the allegation.

There were no indications that the Government discriminated against members of any religious group in making restitution to previous owners of properties that were nationalized during the Communist period. The Government has supported in principle the need for restitution, although actual progress apparently has stalled on two lucrative commercial properties believed to belong rightfully to the Jewish

community. The Orthodox Church and the Muslim community each claim significant numbers of properties currently held by the Government, although the validity of some of these claims appears open to dispute.

The previous government refused to recognize an alternative Patriarch elected by supporters in 1996, and the schism that opened in the Orthodox Church in 1992 continued, despite the death of this alternative Patriarch in April 1999. The Government nevertheless encouraged the feuding factions to heal their prolonged rift. To date, these efforts have not been successful.

The National Assembly passed a law on alternatives to military service in October 1998, which entered into force on January 1, 1999. Under this law, alternative service is now 2 years, more than twice as long as regular military service. Universal conscripted military service has been reduced to 9 months for most recruits, while university graduates are to serve just 6 months. Reportedly, several individuals currently are serving in an alternative civilian capacity in lieu of military service; however, human rights observers complain that procedures for invoking this alternative as a conscientious objector are unclear. Among those already performing alternative service is Krassimir Savov, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses previously imprisoned for refusing mandatory military service, who was released from prison by presidential pardon in March 1999. There were no new reports of incarcerations on religious grounds during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the major religious communities generally were amicable; however, discrimination, harassment, and general public intolerance of nontraditional religious minorities (primarily newer evangelical Protestant groups) remained an intermittent problem. Strongly held suspicion of evangelical denominations among the Orthodox populace is widespread and pervasive across the political spectrum and has resulted in discrimination. Often cloaked in a veneer of "patriotism," intolerance of the religious beliefs of others is common. Such mainstream public pressure for the containment of "foreign religious sects" inevitably influences policymakers. Nevertheless, human rights observers agreed that such discrimination has gradually lessened over the last 3 years as society has appeared to become more accepting of at least some previously unfamiliar, "non-traditional," religions.

Non-Orthodox religious groups continued to be affected adversely by periodic negative media coverage. For example, in the Pleven region, a local television station broadcast several times an inflammatory statement purportedly representing the views of the local Bulgarian Orthodox bishop. The statement accused missionaries of the Evangelical Baptist Church of being "agents of foreign influence" and of distributing expired and second-rate goods through its charitable aid program. It further alleged that the Baptists' efforts to build a new medical facility in the region were effectively a bribe to local authorities to gain permission to build a Baptist church in the area.

On November 12, 2000, unknown vandals sprayed anti-Turkish and anti-Roma graffiti on the mosque in Silistra.

On December 13, 2000, about 2,000 Orthodox clergy and Church members marched in Sofia to protest the Government's refusal to register the Holy Synod headed by Patriarch Maksim. The Government refuses to register the synod citing an administrative court ruling that there are two Orthodox Churches in the country.

In May 2000, in Maritsa volunteer workers representing the Christian Unity Foundation were beaten, one severely, when they attempted to conduct a scheduled screening of a documentary-style film on the life of Jesus Christ. The film itself was stolen from their car. The attack was carried out by six to eight youths, under the apparent direction of a local Bulgarian Orthodox priest. No further investigation into the case was reported.

In August 1999, the Mormon Church in Burgas was vandalized when stones were thrown through two of the church windows. In October 1999, in Kotel, a group of youths who claimed to be members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) political party chased a representative of the Lutheran Church and his family from the home in which there were staying. In December 1999, the Zion Christian Church in Stara Zagora was vandalized with hate graffiti.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy regularly monitors religious freedom in ongoing contacts with government officials, clergy, lay leaders of minority communities, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). Embassy officers have met with Orthodox clergymembers (from both sides of the schism), the Chief Mufti and other senior Muslim leaders, with religious and lay leaders of the Jewish community, as well as with the leaders of numerous Protestant denominations. During the period covered by this report, the Embassy has remained closely engaged with the Government and Parliament in discussions of the proposed law on religious denominations. The Ambassador met with senior members of the Government and Parliament to convey the U.S. Government's concern about many aspects of the proposed law. After the Embassy's repeated urging to seek the view of international scholars of religion law, Parliament forwarded the draft to the Council of Europe (COE) in December 2000 for review and comment. Action on the law was deferred indefinitely once it was sent to the COE, and the bill lapsed permanently when the 38th Parliament was dissolved in April 2001.

CROATIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religious conviction, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and the democratic coalition Government continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. There is no official state religion; however, the Roman Catholic Church is one of the most powerful national symbols and enjoys a historic relationship with the State not shared by other denominations, and receives some state support.

Notions of religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in society. During the past 10 years, religious institutions of all faiths have been targets of violence, reflecting the conflicts underway. Such incidents still occur, particularly in the Danubian region (Eastern Slavonia), where there were persistent reports of vandalism directed against Serb Orthodox buildings and cemeteries.

The U.S. Government continues to encourage the Government to respect religious freedom in practice. Embassy officials frequently meet with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities and with government officials to promote respect for religious freedom and protection of human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 21,829 square miles and its population is approximately 4,677,000. The religious breakdown of the country is approximately: Roman Catholic, 85 percent; Orthodox Christian, 6 percent; Muslim, 1 percent; Jewish, less than 1 percent; other, 4 percent; and atheist, 2 percent. These numbers are approximate because the results of the April 2001 census—the first to be conducted since 1991, before the war and its associated population shifts—are not yet available. These statistics correlate closely with the country's ethnic makeup. The Orthodox can be found in Serb areas, notably cities and the war-affected regions, and members of other minority religions can be found mostly in urban areas. Most immigrants are Roman Catholic ethnic Croats.

Protestants from a number of denominations and foreign clergy actively practice and proselytize, as do representatives of Eastern religions. Missionaries from a number of different groups are present in the country, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, Greek Catholics, Pentecostals, Hare Krishnas, and a wide range of evangelical Protestant Christians (including Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Church of Christ, and various non-denominational organizations such as the Campus Crusades for Christ). Contrary to the situation in past years, there were no reports of missionaries experiencing difficulties in obtaining missionary visas during the period covered by this report.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religious conviction, and the Government generally respects these

rights in practice. There is no official state religion; however, the Roman Catholic Church receives some state support.

The Government is drafting a new law on religious communities in consultations with the religious communities; it is expected to be debated by Parliament during autumn 2001. Religious leaders expressed satisfaction with their level of participation in the drafting procedure. Among other issues, the law is expected to regulate religious education in public schools and government funding for religious minorities.

In the past, the dividing line between the Catholic Church and the State often was blurred, as the then-ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party periodically attempted to identify itself more closely with the Catholic Church. However, parliamentary elections in January 2000 brought to power a democratic Government committed to respecting human rights and to improving cooperation with all religious communities.

Representatives of minority religious communities indicate that the overall climate for religious freedom has improved since the January 2000 election of a democratic coalition government. For example, leaders of the Islamic community expressed satisfaction with both the Government's approach and media coverage of religious communities. While the new Government has expressed interest in eliminating religious discrimination, its approach is ad hoc, treating problems as they arise and addressing specific issues (for example, the validity of religious marriage ceremonies) with individual religious communities rather than setting uniform non-discriminatory standards and practices.

In July 2000, the Catholic Church signed an agreement with the state-run Croatian State Radio and Television (HRT) to provide regular, extensive coverage of Catholic events (as much as 10 hours per month). Other denominations receive about 10 minutes broadcast time per month or less. The Catholic Church operates the country's only private national radio station, Catholic Radio, which is financed by private contributions. The Jewish community reports no restrictions on religious broadcasting. Jewish topics are covered periodically on weekly religious programming of HRT, for example, at times of Jewish holidays. The Muslim community has 4.5 minutes of radio broadcast time per month, as well as 4.5 minutes per month on Radio Zagreb. In addition, the Bairam ceremony from the Zagreb mosque is telecast annually.

Muslims have the right to observe their religious holidays. They are granted a paid holiday for one Bairam and have the right to observe the other as well (although they are not paid for the day).

The Government requires that religious training be provided in schools, although attendance is optional; however, in general, the lack of resources, minority students, and qualified teachers impeded instruction in minority faiths, and the Catholic catechism was the one predominantly offered.

Missionaries do not operate registered schools, but the Mormon community provides free English lessons, which normally are followed by some sort of religious class. In December 2000, the Ministry of Education began recognizing the diploma conferred by the Muslim community's secondary school in Zagreb. Enrollment in this school subsequently increased by 50 percent. An estimated 4,000 primary and secondary school children in 35 schools in the Danubian region (Eastern Slavonia) attend Orthodox religion classes. The classes are led by 20 Orthodox priests and 4 laypersons. Orthodox officials organizing these classes stated that they cooperated well with the Ministry of Education, which organized a series of orientation seminars for the teachers.

There is no government-sponsored ecumenical activity.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government imposes no formal restrictions on religious groups, and all religious communities are free to conduct public services and to open and run social and charitable institutions. Contrary to past years, there were no reports of missionaries experiencing difficulties in obtaining missionary visas during the period covered by this report.

While there is no official state religion, the Roman Catholic Church receives direct subsidies, as well as state financing for some salaries and pensions for priests and nuns through the government-managed pension and health funds. Other religious communities still do not have such an agreement with the State, nor is there a law that regulates these issues. (Orthodox priests and imams have been paying their contributions to the health and pension funds from their own resources, in order to be covered by a pension plan.)

Facilitating the return of refugees is a challenge for the new Government, which has made progress in a number of areas relating to returns. However, many ethnic

Serbs who wish to return to Croatia, including Serbian Orthodox clergy, continued to encounter difficulties recovering their prewar property and reconstructing damaged or destroyed houses. There were no reports of specific discrimination against Orthodox clergy beyond that faced by other ethnic Serb citizen refugees. Notions of religion and ethnicity are linked closely in society, but the majority of incidents of discrimination are motivated by ethnicity rather than religion or religious doctrine. A pattern of often open and severe discrimination continues against ethnic Serbs, and, at times, other minorities in a wide number of areas, including the administration of justice, employment, housing, and freedom of movement. The then-HDZ party government often maintained a double standard of treatment based on ethnicity; effects of this double standard continue.

The Government requires that religious training be provided in schools, although attendance is optional. Schools filling the necessary quota of seven minority students per class offered separate religion classes for these students. In classes not meeting this quota, minority students could fulfill the religion requirement by bringing a certificate that they had received classes from their religious community. Generally, the lack of resources, minority students, and qualified teachers impeded instruction in minority faiths, and the Catholic catechism was the one predominantly offered. Although religious training is not obligatory, in the past some students reportedly felt pressured to participate. Jewish officials noted that basic information about Judaism provided to students was inaccurate, and their offers to improve the material continued to receive no response.

The Ministry of Defense employs 20 Catholic priests to minister to Catholics in the military. However, neither Orthodox nor Muslim clerics were given this opportunity. A Catholic priest is present and gives a blessing at the oath-giving ceremony upon entering the army, but other clerics have not been invited to participate.

The previous HDZ Government implemented property restitution in a discriminatory manner. In 1998 the Government signed a concordat with the Vatican that provided for the return of all Catholic Church property confiscated by the Communist regime after 1945. This agreement stipulates that the Government would return seized properties or compensate the Church where return is impossible. Some progress has been made with some returnable properties being restituted, but there has been no compensation to date for nonreturnable properties. Three other agreements with the Vatican regulate Catholic marriages, public school catechism, and military chaplains.

There have been no property restitution agreements between the Government and other religious groups. The Orthodox community has filed several requests for the return of seized properties, and some cases have been resolved successfully, particularly cases involving buildings in urban centers. However, several buildings in downtown Zagreb have not been returned, nor have properties that belonged to monasteries, such as arable land and forest. This uneven progress may be the result of a slow judicial system rather than a systematic effort to deny restitution of Orthodox properties. Several Jewish properties, including some Zagreb buildings, have not been returned. No properties have been returned to the Jewish community since March 2000. The Jewish community identifies property return as one of its top priorities. The Government failed to amend discriminatory clauses of the Law on Compensation for Property Taken During Yugoslav Communist Rule that were struck down by the Constitutional Court in 1999. The Government failed to meet a court-mandated March 31, 2001 deadline to enact the amendments, obtaining an extension until July 15, 2001. The new amendments are expected to extend compensation to Jews whose property was confiscated between 1941 and 1945 as well as to foreigners.

Catholic marriages are recognized by the State, eliminating the need to register them in the civil registry office. The Muslim and Jewish communities, seeking similar status, have raised this issue repeatedly with the Government, but there had been no resolution by the end of the period covered by this report.

The World War II Jasenovac concentration camp, site of a memorial and museum, was damaged severely during the recent conflict and renovation is ongoing. In April 2001, a government delegation, led by the Minister of Culture, attended a commemoration ceremony there that also was attended by several leaders of ethnic and religious minority communities.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Notions of religion and ethnicity are intertwined closely in society, and religion often was used to identify non-Croats and to single them out for discriminatory practices. This caused religious institutions to be targets of violence. In the past 10 years, religious institutions of all faiths have been targets of violence. Such incidents still occur, particularly in the tense Danubian region (Eastern Slavonia), where there were persistent reports of vandalism directed against Serb Orthodox buildings and cemeteries. Monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) recorded 23 incidents of harassment or violence towards religious persons or sites during the period covered by this report; 18 of these were directed against the Serb Orthodox community, including several incidents of disruption of religious services, harassment of Orthodox clergy, and damage to cemeteries. In February 2001, the Orthodox church in Darda, in the tense Eastern Slavonian region, was vandalized for the fifth time in 18 months when windows and a door were damaged. In addition, the Orthodox church reports that the bishop of Sibenik is unable to appear in public in his clerical garments due to constant harassment. In August 2000, unidentified vandals broke into the Orthodox church in the Danubian town of Branjina and wrote anti-Serb messages on the walls; no arrests were made. In July 2000, an Orthodox priest in Ilok, Eastern Slavonia, was crossing the street in his clerical robes when a car swerved to hit him. He was uninjured and the driver was given a warning by police.

In contrast to the previous reporting period, Jewish leaders reported no serious discriminatory incidents during the period covered by this report. Anti-Semitic letters were mailed to the Jewish Center in Zagreb in April and May 2001 and were turned over to the police; no arrests were made. A series of harsh anonymous telephone calls to the Center ceased after police began investigating.

The Catholic Church at times was openly critical of the previous government. However, conservative elements within the Catholic hierarchy in the country have shown increasing dissatisfaction with the policies of the new coalition Government. In January 2001, conservative Dalmatian bishops boycotted President Stjepan Mesić's annual reception for religious communities, apparently to register their dissatisfaction with both the Government and Catholic Archbishop Josip Bozanić's progressive stances. In February 2001, several of the Dalmatian clergy publicly supported right-wing demonstrations in support of General Mirko Norac, who is indicted for war crimes. In March 2001, a conservative editorial in the church's weekly publication, *Glas Koncila*, sharply criticized government policies and highlighted this policy rift within the hierarchy.

Since Catholic Archbishop Bozanić took office in 1997, the Catholic Church has sought a more proactive role in advocating reconciliation. Catholic Radio includes a monthly program on ecumenism, inviting speakers from other religious communities. Ecumenical efforts among the religious communities have developed in an atmosphere of mutual understanding. For example, religious leaders met frequently during the reporting period, both formally and informally, to provide input to the government office drafting the religious legislation and to discuss other issues of mutual interest. Participants describe these sessions as "friendly and healthy."

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government actively works to encourage the Government to respect religious freedom in practice and to support the efforts of the Catholic Church to foster a constructive environment in post-conflict society. Embassy officials have frequent meetings at all levels with representatives of the ethnic Serb (Orthodox) community as well as the Jewish and Muslim communities and are engaged in the promotion of human rights, including the religious rights, of these groups. Embassy officials meet and hold frequent discussions at all levels with government officials about respect for religious freedom and problems of discrimination against religious communities. The Embassy is a leader of the "Article 11 Commission," a group of 24 international missions in the country that deals directly with issues of ethnic and religious reconciliation and human rights.

CYPRUS

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The basic law in the Turk-

ish Cypriot community also provides for freedom of religion, and the Turkish Cypriot authorities generally respect 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; however, reciprocal visits to religious sites were restricted during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there were a few instances of vandalism of unused religious sites.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the authorities in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 3,571 square miles and its population is estimated at 758,000.

Prior to 1974, Cyprus experienced a long period of intercommunal strife between its Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. In response, the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) began peacekeeping operations in 1964. The island has been divided since the Turkish military intervention of 1974, following a coup d'etat directed from Greece; the southern part of the island is under the control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, while the northern part is ruled by a Turkish Cypriot administration. In 1983 that administration proclaimed itself the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC"). The TRNC is not recognized by the United States or any other country except Turkey.

Approximately 96 percent of the population in the government-controlled area are Greek Orthodox. Approximately 0.6 percent are Maronite, slightly under 0.3 percent are Armenian Orthodox, 0.2 percent are Latin (Roman Catholic), and 4 percent belong to other groups; the latter category includes small groups of Cypriot Protestants and foreigners of all religious beliefs.

A 1998 opinion poll indicated that about 48 percent of Greek Cypriots attend church services regularly, while 49 percent attend only for major religious holidays and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The remainder does not attend religious services at all. Approximately 10 percent of the population in the north attend religious services regularly.

An estimated 99 percent of the Turkish Cypriot population is at least nominally Muslim. There is a small Turkish Cypriot Baha'i community. Most other non-Muslims in the north are foreigners from Western Europe who are frequently members of the Roman Catholic or Anglican Church.

There is some western Protestant missionary activity in the government-controlled area.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The basic law in the Turkish Cypriot community also provides for freedom of religion and the authorities generally respect this right in practice. Turkish Cypriots residing in the south and Greek Cypriots living in the north are allowed to practice their religions.

The 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus specifies that the Greek Orthodox Church (which is autocephalous and not under the authority of the mainland Greek Orthodox Church) has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with its holy canons and charter. Similarly, the Constitution states that the Turkish Cypriot religious trust, the Vakf (the Muslim institution that regulates religious activity for Turkish Cypriots), has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with Vakf laws and principles. No legislative, executive, or other act can contravene or interfere with the Orthodox Church or the Vakf. Both the Greek Orthodox Church and the Vakf are tax exempt with regard to religious activity. According to law, they are required to pay taxes only on strictly commercial activity.

Three other religious groups are recognized in the Constitution: Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Christians, and Latins (Roman Catholics). These groups also are exempt from taxes and are eligible, along with the Orthodox Church and the Vakf, for government subsidies to their religious institutions. No other religious group is recognized in the Constitution.

Both the Government of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot administration have constitutional or legal bars against religious discrimination. The basic agreement cov-

ering treatment of Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north and Turkish Cypriots living in the south remains the 1975 Vienna III Agreement. Among other things, this agreement provides for facilities for religious worship.

Religions other than the five recognized religions are not required to register with government authorities; however, if they desire to engage in financial transactions, such as maintaining a bank account, they must register as a nonprofit company, and most do so. The registration process involves submission through an attorney of an application that states the purpose of the nonprofit organization and provides the names of the organization's directors. Annual reports of the organization's activities are required. Such nonprofit organizations are tax exempt. Registration is granted promptly and many religious groups are recognized. No religious groups were denied registration during the period covered by this report.

Instruction in the Greek Orthodox religion is mandatory for all Greek Orthodox children and is taught in all public primary and secondary schools in classes held twice per week in the government-controlled area. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses and Maronite parents can request that their children be excused from such instruction. Such requests routinely are granted. There are no reports of practitioners of other religions requesting such an exemption.

The Government of Cyprus recognizes the following religious holidays as national holidays: the Epiphany, Evangelismos, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Holy Spirit Day, Assumption Day, and Christmas Day.

There are no prohibitions against missionary activity or proselytizing in the government-controlled areas. Foreign missionaries must obtain and periodically renew residence permits in order to live in the country; normally renewal requests are not denied.

There is no government-sponsored interfaith activity.

In the northern part of the island, the Turkish Cypriot basic law refers specifically to a "secular republic," and provides for religious freedom; no specific religion is recognized in the basic law. However, based on the 1960 Constitution, the Vakf, which pays the costs of Muslim religious activities and the salaries of Muslim religious leaders, is tax-exempt in regard to its religious activities (the Vakf pays taxes on its commercial and real estate operations) and receives official subsidies. No other religious organization is tax-exempt or receives subsidies.

Religious organizations are not required to register with the Turkish Cypriot authorities unless they wish to engage in commercial activity or apply for tax-exempt status. There are no legal restrictions on missionary activity; however, such activity is rare.

There is instruction in religion, ethics, and comparative religions in two grades of the primary school system in the Turkish Cypriot community. There is no formal Islamic religious instruction in public schools and there are no state-supported religious schools.

The following religious holidays are observed widely in the Turkish Cypriot community: Kurban Bairam, Birthday of the Prophet, and Ramazan Bairam.

The Turkish Cypriot authorities do not sponsor any interfaith activity.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On May 10, 2001, in a case brought by the Government of Cyprus against the Government of Turkey, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Government of Turkey was responsible for restrictions imposed on Greek Cypriots resident in the north in regard to their access to places of worship and participation in other areas of religious life.

In 2001 Turkish Cypriot authorities and the Government of Cyprus came to an agreement, after 4 years, on the assignment of a second Orthodox priest to work in the north. However, the Government of Cyprus had not identified a candidate for the position at the end of the period covered by this report.

In May 2000, the Turkish Cypriot authorities eliminated the system of fees imposed in 1998 for crossing the buffer zone, although a \$1.45 (1 British pound) processing fee remains in effect. Reciprocal visits to religious sites were suspended in July 2000. Such visits took place under a 1997 agreement which allowed Greek Cypriots to visit the Apostolos Andreas monastery in the north on designated Christian religious holidays, and Turkish Cypriots to visit the Hala Sultan mosque in the south on certain Muslim religious holidays. On July 31, 2000, Greek Cypriot officials responded to Turkish forces establishing a new manned checkpoint in a location adjacent to the Greek Cypriot village of Strovilia and the British eastern sovereign base area and denied Turkish Cypriots land passage to Kokkina. Visits to this area (which contains a memorial and is surrounded by the government-controlled area) are included in the 1997 reciprocal visit agreement. In August and November 2000, Turkish Cypriot officials denied access to southern Greek Cypriots to visit the

Apostolos Andreas monastery; April 2001 visits to the monastery and mosque also did not take place.

Maronites may not visit certain religious sites in the north located in military zones. Armenians may not visit any religious sites in the north.

Although missionaries have the legal right to proselytize in both communities, missionary activities are monitored closely by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot authorities. The police may initiate investigations of religious activity based on a citizen's complaint under laws that make it illegal for a missionary to use "physical or moral compulsion" in an attempt to make religious conversions, or when missionaries may be involved in illegal activities that threaten the security of the republic, constitutional or public order, or public health and morals. There are occasional apprehensions under these laws resulting in publicity but no arrests.

In both the government-controlled areas and the Turkish Cypriot community, there were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

In both the government-controlled areas and the Turkish Cypriot community, 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 authorities' refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are polite relations between the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church and the other religious communities in the south. In the north there are few non-Muslims, but there is no friction between them and the nominally Muslim population. However, there are complaints of vandalism of unused Orthodox churches. Turkish Cypriots complain that unused mosques in the south have been treated similarly. Orthodox churches and cemeteries in the north continue to deteriorate due to vandalism and neglect. An unused Orthodox Church in the north is located in the center of a resort constructed during the year 2000 on the ground surrounding the church. Greek Cypriots complain that since 1974, religious icons have been removed from Orthodox churches in the north. A previously unknown Greek Cypriot nationalist organization claimed responsibility for an arson attack on a mosque in the south in August 1999; damage was light. The authorities repaired and built a fence around the mosque and pledged to increase protection of Muslim sites. No one was arrested for the attack.

The Orthodox Church is suspicious of any attempts to proselytize among Greek Cypriots and closely monitors such activities. On occasion the Greek Cypriot media has given extensive coverage to the activities of foreign missionaries, creating a chilling effect on those activities.

There has been little effort at ecumenical activity. In recent years, an international conference on understanding among religions has been sponsored annually by a private foundation in the government-controlled areas; otherwise, there has been little interest in such activities either in the government-controlled areas or in the Turkish Cypriot community.

Religion is a significantly more prominent component of Greek Cypriot society than of Turkish Cypriot society, with correspondingly greater cultural and political influence. One example of the relationship between church and state among Greek Cypriots is the fact that the leader of the Greek Cypriot campaign for independence in the 1950's was the head of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Makarios III, who became President from independence in 1960 and served until his death in 1977.

As the largest owner of real estate in the south and the operator of several large business enterprises, the Greek Orthodox Church is a significant economic factor. Similarly, the Vakf is the largest landowner in the north.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the authorities in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

The U.S. Embassy played a key role, working closely with the United Nations, in obtaining agreement from both sides in January 2000 to initiate a project to restore the island's two most significant religious sites, the Apostolos Andreas monastery and the Hala Sultan mosque. This agreement was announced by U.N. Secretary General Annan. Restoration work began in early 2001.

The Ambassador and other Embassy officers meet periodically with Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot religious authorities regarding specific religious freedom concerns.

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 30,379 square miles and its population is an estimated 10.3 million. The country has a largely homogenous population with a dominant Christian tradition. However, largely as a result of 40 years of Communist rule between 1948 and 1989, the vast majority of the citizens do not identify themselves as members of any organized religion. In a February 2001 opinion poll, 38 percent of respondents claimed to believe in God, while 52 percent identified themselves as atheists. Nearly half of those responding agreed that churches were beneficial to society. There was a revival of interest in religion after the 1989 "Velvet Revolution;" however, the number of those professing religious beliefs or participating in organized religion has fallen steadily since then in almost every region of the country.

An estimated 5 percent of the population attend Catholic services weekly. Most of these churchgoers live in the southern Moravian dioceses of Olomouc and Brno. The number of practicing Protestants is even lower (approximately 1 percent). Leaders of the local Muslim community estimate that there are 20,000 to 30,000 Muslims, although Islam has not been registered as an officially recognized religion since the Communist takeover in 1948. There is a mosque in Brno and another in Prague. The Jewish community, which numbers only a few thousand persons, is an officially registered religion, since it was recognized by the State before 1989.

Missionaries of various religious groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses, are present in the country. Missionaries of various religions generally proselytize without hindrance.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Religious affairs are the responsibility of the Department of Churches at the Ministry of Culture. All religions officially registered with the Ministry of Culture are eligible to receive subsidies from the State, although some religions decline state financial support as a matter of principle and as an expression of their independence. There are 21 state-recognized religions, 2 of which have been registered since 1991; no groups were seeking to register at the end of the period covered by this report. The Unification Church (UC) was denied registration in January 1999 when the Department of Churches determined that it had obtained the required proof of membership by fraud; the UC's suit contesting the decision still was before a court at the end of the period covered by this report. Registration of Islam has been discussed with the Department of Churches, but there has been no formal application. To register a religious group must have at least 10,000 adult members permanently residing in the country. For any churches, which the World Council of Churches has recognized already, only 500 adult members permanently residing in the country are necessary. These churches receive the same legal and financial benefits from the Government as do other churches. Churches registered prior to 1991, such as the small Jewish community, are not required to meet these conditions. Unregistered religious groups, such as the small Muslim minority, may not own community property legally, but often form civic-interest associations for the purpose of managing

their property and other holdings until they are able to meet the qualifications for registration. The Government does not interfere with or prevent this type of interim solution. Unregistered religious groups otherwise are free to assemble and worship in the manner of their choice.

A draft bill on "Religious Freedom and the Position of Churches and Religious Associations" was approved by the Chamber of Deputies upon first reading on May 17, 2001. The Committee on Science, Education, Culture, and Youth recommended on June 27, 2001, that the Chamber upon second reading approve the bill, which is not expected before October 2001. The draft is modeled on the Austrian Religious Registration law and would impose a two-tiered registration system. The law would create a new lower tier (nonprofit religious association with limited tax benefits) that would require a group to have at least 300 members. The draft law would require a religious group to have adult adherents equal to at least 0.2 percent of the population of the country in order to achieve full registration. This is double the current requirement of 0.1 percent of the population. The new law would also impose a 10-year observation period and an annual reporting requirement on all first-tier religious organizations wishing to obtain full registration status. Some unregistered religious groups (including the Muslims and the Church of Scientology) and non-governmental observers criticized the proposed law and claimed that it is prejudicial against minority religions.

Churches receive approximately \$88.2 million (3 billion Czech crowns) annually from the Government. Funds are divided proportionally among the 21 registered religions based on the number of clergy in each, with the exception of 4 religions (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Apostolic Church, and Christian Communities) that do not accept state funding. Of this sum, approximately \$17 million (642 million Czech crowns) is used to pay salaries to clergymen. The rest of the funding goes to state grants for church medical, charity, and educational activities, as well as for the maintenance of church memorials and buildings.

In September 2000, Parliament passed a law outlawing Holocaust denial. The law provides for prison sentences of 6 months to 3 years for public denial, questioning, approval, or attempts to justify the Nazi genocide.

To work in the country missionaries must obtain a long-term residence and work permit if they intend to remain longer than 30 days. Previously reported delays in processing visas and permits for visiting missionaries and clergy diminished during the period covered by this report. There is no special visa category for religious workers; foreign missionaries and clergy are required to meet the relatively stringent conditions for a standard work permit even if their activity is strictly ecclesiastical or voluntary in nature.

Religion is not taught in public schools, although a few private religious schools exist. Religious broadcasters are free to operate without hindrance from the Government or other parties.

Members of unregistered religious groups can issue publications without interference.

There was no government-sponsored interfaith activity.

The two government commissions established in 1999 to improve church-state relations continued to meet during the period covered by this report. One of the commissions is a "political" commission with the presence of all parties represented in Parliament, and the second is a "specialist" commission composed of experts including lawyers, economists, and church representatives. The commissions advise the Government on church-related property questions and legislation on religious topics.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government made progress in resolving religious-based communal and personal property restitution problems, especially with regard to Jewish property. Jewish claims date to the period of the Nazi occupation, while Catholic authorities are pressing claims to properties that were seized under the former Communist regime. Although after 1989 the Government and Prague city officials returned most synagogues and other buildings previously belonging to religious orders, many claims to properties in the hands of other municipal authorities have not yet been resolved.

satisfactorily. Restitution or compensation of several categories of Jewish personal property is in progress. In addition the Catholic Church claims vast tracts of woods and farmlands.

The 1991 Law on Restitution applied only to property seized after the Communists took power in 1948. In 1994 the Parliament amended the law to provide restitution of, or compensation for, property wrongfully seized between 1938 and 1945. This amendment provided for the inclusion of Jewish private properties, primarily buildings, seized by the Nazi regime. In the late 1990's, the Federation of Jewish Communities identified 202 communal properties as its highest priorities for restitution, although it had unresolved claims for over 1,000 properties. By decree the Government returned most of the properties in its possession, as did the city of Prague; however, despite a government appeal, other cities have not been as responsive. As of June 30, 2000, only 68 of the 202 properties have been returned. In November 1998, the Government established a commission to document the status of former Jewish communal property and, to a limited extent, personal property, and to make recommendations to the Government. In July 2000, the commission's proposed legislation was signed into law. The law authorized the return of 200 communal Jewish properties in state hands. The same law also authorized the Government to return more than 60 works of art in the National Gallery to the Jewish community and an estimated 7,000 works of art in the State's possession to individual Jewish citizens and their descendants. A fourth provision of the law authorized the return of certain agricultural property in the Government's possession to its original owners. In the spring of 1999, the commission's chairman, Deputy Prime Minister Pavel Rychetsky, proposed a compensation fund to pay for those properties that cannot be restituted physically. In September 2000, the Government proposed and the Chamber of Deputies authorized approximately \$7.9 million (300 million crowns) for this fund. The fund, which began operating in June 2001, is expected to provide partial compensation in those cases where the Government needs to retain the property or is no longer in possession of it, help meet the social needs of poor Jewish communities outside Prague, and support the restoration of synagogues and cemeteries. Approximately two-thirds of the funds are to be dedicated to communal property and one-third to individual claims.

Certain property of religious orders, including 175 monasteries and other institutions, was restituted under laws passed in 1990 and 1991, but the return generally did not include income-generating properties. When the Social Democratic government came to power in August 1998, it halted further restitution of non-Jewish religious communal property, including a decision of the previous government to return 432,250 acres of land and some 700 buildings to the Catholic Church. Discussions are continuing in the two church-state commissions on the form of an overall settlement of all outstanding restitution issues, including further restitution of Protestant properties. In October 2000, Prime Minister Milos Zeman visited the Vatican and discussed Czech Republic/Catholic relations and property restitution with Pope John Paul II. In April 2001, the Government agreed in principle to draft a law that would allow for the return of houses of worship, parish houses, and monasteries to the Catholic Church.

In September 2000, after months of negotiations between the Government and the Prague Jewish community, over 100 sets of Jewish remains from the middle ages found at a commercial construction site in downtown Prague were buried in the New Jewish Cemetery. The Ministry of Culture declared an additional 25 gravesites a cultural monument, and the intact remains were encased in a concrete sarcophagus.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

The immigrant population is still relatively small, and includes persons from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia. Immigrants have not reported any difficulties in practicing their respective faiths.

Local Muslims reported that there were no incidents of religious intolerance toward their community during the period covered by this report.

A small but persistent and fairly well-organized extreme rightwing movement with anti-Semitic views exists in the country. Police were criticized on several occasions during the period covered by this report for failing to intervene against neo-Nazis shouting anti-Semitic slogans at concerts and rallies. In May 2001, the Ministry of the Interior announced a forceful effort to counter the neo-Nazis.

The legal actions against the 12 persons in Plzen arrested in February 1999 for distributing racist, Fascist, and anti-Semitic literature were resolved during the pe-

riod covered by this report. Eight of the 12 defendants were prosecuted; 4 were convicted and 4 were acquitted. Their sentences were handed down in March 2001. Three of those convicted received 18 months imprisonment and 2 years probation. One received 24 months imprisonment and 3 years probation, because of the additional charge of possession of a firearm. There were no appeals and the sentences became final in June 2001.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Government efforts on religious issues have focused largely on encouraging the Government to resolve religious property restitution claims and to avoid drafting legislation that would discriminate against minority religions.

During the period covered by this report, U.S. Government and embassy officials emphasized on numerous occasions to the Government the importance of returning property wrongfully taken from Holocaust victims, the Jewish community, and churches, or of fair and adequate compensation when return is no longer possible. During a visit to the country in November and December 2000, the Department of State's Special Advisor for Central and Eastern European Property Affairs discussed restitution issues in meetings with Jewish leaders, members of Parliament, and the Czech Bishops' Conference. The Special Advisor also met with a representative of the government Commission on Holocaust Issues, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, and with the special envoy for Holocaust issues.

Beginning in late December 1999, the Embassy, the Department of State, and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad devoted considerable effort to facilitate a mutually acceptable settlement of the long-standing dispute over a medieval Jewish cemetery uncovered in 1997 at a commercial construction site in Prague (see Section II). The Embassy maintained close contact on this matter with the Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, and the Prague Jewish community. The Embassy met on several occasions with the Culture Ministry's Department of Churches to discuss a range of topics, most importantly the Ministry's draft legislation on registration of churches. Embassy officials also responded to individual requests for assistance from Czech-American Holocaust victims seeking compensation.

DENMARK

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 Evangelical Lutheran Church is the state church and enjoys some privileges not available to other faiths.

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

The U.S. and Danish Governments discuss religious freedom issues in the context of their overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 16,640 square miles and its population is approximately 5.3 million. Over 86 percent of the population adheres to the Evangelical Lutheran Church; it is the only church that receives government funds. Other religious organizations represent approximately 5 percent of the population, with Muslims, the next largest group, accounting for 2 percent of the population. The remaining 9 percent of the citizens are without a religion.

There are missionaries operating within the country, including representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses; however, there is no detailed information available on missionary activity.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this

right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is an official state religion. The Constitution stipulates that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the national church, and it is subsidized by the Government. However, no individual can be compelled to pay tax or provide financial support to the national church or any other religious organization. By 1969, 11 other religious organizations had official recognition by royal decree (essentially the State's permission for a religious organization to perform religious ceremonies; for example, weddings, which have civil validity).

Since the implementation of the 1969 Marriage Act, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs has granted permission to clergy of 60 additional, nonrecognized religious organizations to perform marriages. The Marriage Act permits weddings to be performed "within other religious organizations," provided that one of the parties to the marriage belongs to the organization, and the organization has clergy that have been granted permission to perform marriage by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Thus, religious organizations no longer need to obtain "recognition" since "approval" is given when the Ministry grants permission to perform weddings to specific religious organizations. Both recognized and approved religions enjoy certain tax exemptions. The approval process is not complicated or protracted.

In February 1998, the Government appointed an independent four-member council to prepare guidelines and principles for official approval of religious organizations. The government statement accompanying the action noted that the step was taken due to the growing number of applications in recent years for official approval as a religious organization.

In March 1999, the Council published guidelines for future approval of religious organizations. These guidelines are linked to the 1969 Marriage Act. They established clear requirements that religious organizations must fulfill, including providing the following: A written text of the religion's central traditions; descriptions of its most important rituals; an organizational structure accessible for public control and approval; and constitutionally elected representatives who can be held responsible by authorities. Additionally, the organization must "not teach or perform actions inconsistent with public morality or order."

Scientologists continue to seek official approval as a religious organization. Their first application for approval was made in the early 1980's and rejected; the second application was made in mid-1997 and withdrawn in early 1998. The second application was resubmitted in 1999 and withdrawn again in early 2000, shortly before a decision by the Government was expected. In withdrawing the application, the Church of Scientology asked the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs for additional time to respond to reports about Scientology that had appeared in the media. In January 2001, Scientology officials reported that their lawyers were preparing to resubmit their application in the summer of 2001.

There are no restrictions on proselytizing so long as proselytizers obey the law and do not act inconsistently with public morality or order. All schools, including religious schools, receive government financial support. While the Evangelical Lutheran faith is taught in the public schools, a student may withdraw from religious classes with parental consent.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In November 2000, Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen publicly criticized the practice of Muslim workers taking four "prayer breaks" during the workday. However, his comments were rejected widely, including by members of his own party, the Social Democrats. It generally was agreed that "prayer breaks" are not a problem in the workplace, and the Prime Minister publicly apologized on December 19.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

After several years of searching for an appropriate site, the Muslim community has identified a piece of land in Broendbyoester in which they would like to build the country's first Muslim cemetery. The Muslim community is also attempting to identify a site and funding for building a full-scale mosque in the country.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country has a long history of welcoming religious minorities and affording them equal treatment. There are generally amicable relations between religious groups, although the recent influx of a substantial Muslim population has resulted in some tension with the majority population of adherents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Minority group unemployment tends to be higher, and allegations of discrimination on the basis of religion sometimes are raised. However, it is difficult to separate religious differences from differences in language and ethnicity, and the latter may be at least as important in explaining unequal access to well-paying jobs and social advancement. There are no significant ecumenical movements that promote greater mutual understanding and religious tolerance.

Scientology officials complain of unfair treatment by the press, particularly in its extensive coverage of the church in the months preceding the anticipated government decision of the Scientologists' application for recognition as a religious organization (see Section II).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. and Danish Governments discuss religious freedom issues in the context of their overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ESTONIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 28,266 square miles and a population of 1.4 million inhabitants (65 percent ethnic Estonian, 35 percent Russian speaking). The majority of citizens are nominally Lutheran, and there is a large Christian Orthodox community. A broad range of other creeds and beliefs make up a small but growing segment of the religious community. However, 40 years of communism diminished the role of religion in society. Many new neighborhoods built since World War II do not have religious centers, and many of the surviving churches require extensive renovations. Church attendance, which had seen a surge coinciding with the independence movement in the early 1990s, now has decreased significantly. Anecdotal evidence from local Lutheran churches, indicates a 76 percent decrease in registered confirmations in that faith between 1990 and 2000.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church is the largest denomination, with 165 congregations and approximately 177,230 members as of May 15, 2001. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church has 59 congregations and the Estonian Orthodox Church, subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate, has 27 congregations. Persons of varying ethnic backgrounds profess Orthodoxy. Lutherans and Orthodox Christians account for the majority of believers. There are smaller communities of Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Estonian Old Believers, and other Christian denominations. There is a small Jewish community. There are also communities of Muslims, Buddhists, and many other denominations and faiths; however, each of these minority faiths has fewer than 6,000 adherents.

The country's small Jewish community was decimated during the Nazi occupation. It now numbers 2,500 members. In December 2000, the country's only synagogue was opened in the Jewish school facility.

Many groups have sent foreign missionaries into the country in recent years; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) is the largest.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution states that there is no state church, thus establishing the separation of church and state. However, this has not been interpreted strictly in administrative practice. For example, in response to an order by the Prime Minister, the coordination of chaplains' services to the prisons is delegated to one of the Lutheran diaconal centers. However, the center carries out this responsibility in a way that does not discriminate against non-Lutherans.

There also are other laws and regulations that directly or indirectly regulate individual and collective freedom of religion. The 1993 law on churches and religious organizations requires all religious organizations to have at least 12 members and to register with the Religious Affairs Department under the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MIA). Leaders of religious organizations must be citizens with at least 5 years' residence in the country. The minutes of the constitutive meeting, a copy of statutes, and a notarized copy of three founders' signatures serve as supporting documents for the registration application. On June 13, 2001, Parliament adopted a revised law on churches and congregations that contained a provision barring the registry of any church or union of congregations whose permanent or temporary administrative or economic management is performed by a leader or institution situated outside Estonia. Both the Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, and the Estonian Council of Churches expressed concern that such wording could prevent the registry of churches and congregations that traditionally had been active in the country. On June 29, President Lennaert Meri refused to promulgate the law, declaring, in part, that it constituted an intrusion into the sphere of autonomy of religious institutions.

Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas day and Boxing Day are national holidays.

A program of basic Christian ecumenical religious instruction is available to public schools. Religious studies in public and private schools are an elective subject both for pupils and for teachers. In the primary classes parents decide about whether their children will participate in religious studies; at the gymnasium level pupils decide this independently. However, public school participation presently exists in only 41 schools, with approximately 1,820 students participating. Additionally, there are two small private church schools that have a religion-based curriculum.

The property restitution process largely has been completed except for those properties disputed by the two main branches of the Christian Orthodox faith. In a few local cases, church properties have been claimed by more than one Christian group, complicating and slowing restitution efforts. The most notable of these involves two competing hierarchies of the Christian Orthodox faith. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), independent since 1919, subordinate to Constantinople since 1923, and exiled under the Soviet occupation, reregistered under its 1935 statute in August 1993. Since then, a group of ethnic Russian and Estonian parishes that prefer to remain under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church structure imposed during the Soviet occupation has insisted, unsuccessfully, that it should have claim to the EAOC name. In January 2001, representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate submitted an official church registration application under the name of the "Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate" to the MIA. On May 21, 2001, the MIA declined to approve the application, explaining that it could not formally register this church under its desired name as it would be confused too easily with the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church. The unregistered status of the church makes negotiations on and the settlement of the issue of the ownership of the Aleksander Nevski Cathedral, a prominent and valuable Tallinn landmark, problematic. The Cathedral currently is owned by the city of Tallinn and rented out to its Russian Orthodox congregation on a several decade lease basis. This dispute over whether the Orthodox Church should be subject to Moscow or Constantinople has taken on political overtones, as sensitivities remain from the 40-year Soviet occupation. According to local Jewish leaders, property restitution is not an issue for the community, as most prewar religious buildings were rented, not owned.

As of June 30, the Satanists, who earlier announced that they would seek to register with the Religious Affairs Department, have not applied for registration. MIA officials initially reacted with concern to the prospect of a registration application from this group. However, they more recently have viewed it as an indication of the group's intention to abide with the laws and government guidelines.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

The Churches and Congregations Act decrees that the commanding officer of each military unit shall ensure conscripts the opportunity to practice their religion. However, it is not clear whether or how this freedom is implemented in practice. The military chaplaincy is delegated by an order of the Prime Minister to an organization operated by the Lutheran Church.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. Although the majority of citizens are nominally Lutheran, ecumenical services during national days, Christian holidays, or at public events are common. Tension between the ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian populations generally does not extend to religious matters; however, the hierarchical dispute and legal conflict over church property does result in some resentment on the part of Christian Orthodox believers belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate (see Section II).

Although persons of varying ethnic backgrounds profess Christian Orthodoxy, most of the religious adherents among the country's Russian-speaking population are Orthodox, while the Estonian majority is predominantly Lutheran. There is a deep-seated tradition of tolerance of other denominations and religions. Although citizens are generally tolerant of new religions and foreign missionaries, some groups that are regarded widely as "cults" cause apprehension.

On November 1, 2000 (All Soul's Day), over 100 grave sites were destroyed in a cemetery in Tartu. Police attribute the crime to Satanists.

While no churches were victimized in the period covered by this report, earlier thefts of church property prompted the Estonian Council of Churches and the board of antiquities to initiate a database on items under protection. The database, which is comprised of digital photos and detailed descriptions, is expected to be shared with law enforcement agencies as needed.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Officials of the U.S. Embassy met regularly during the period covered by this report with appropriate government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and a wide range of figures in religious circles. Embassy officials met with representatives of both sides in the dispute between the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church.

FINLAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. According to law, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church are the established state churches.

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. However, the court has denied registration to the Finnish Association of Scientologists.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 130,127 square miles, and its population is approximately 5,167,000. The majority of the population belongs to one of the two State Churches. Approximately 86 percent are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and 1 percent belong to the Orthodox Church. An additional 1 percent be-

long to a wide variety of non-state religions and 12 percent do not profess any religious affiliation.

Nontraditional religious groups freely profess and propagate their beliefs. Such groups as members of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) have been active in the country for decades. Other groups include the Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish communities.

There is an extremely small but growing immigrant population, whose members tend to practice different faiths than those of most citizens. Many immigrants are Muslims from Somalia.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There are two state churches; the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church. All citizens who belong to one of these state churches pay a church tax as part of their income tax. Those who do not want to pay the tax must inform the applicable state church that they are leaving that church. These church taxes are used to defray the costs of running the state churches. State churches also handle services such as recording births, deaths, and marriages, which for citizens outside these churches are handled by official state registrars.

The Ministry of Education has outlined requirements for recognition of religious communities. Religious groups should have at least 20 members. The purpose of the group should be the public practice of religion, and the activities of the group should be guided by a set of rules. Forty-five of these communities currently are recognized as churches.

The Government's procedures for recognizing religious communities are still under review. The current Law on Freedom of Religion, which has been described as technically unclear, dates from 1923, and draft amendments proposed by a government commission in 1999 aim to clarify the requirements for recognizing and registering religious communities, and to increase opportunities to practice one's faith and to belong to several religious groups simultaneously. The Government is still considering the commission's proposals. The amended law would no longer ban simultaneous membership in several religious groups but would allow religious organizations themselves to regulate membership. In addition, minors over 12 years of age would have the option to change their religious affiliation from that of their parents. The proposed legislation would also reduce restrictions on the organization and operations of religious communities, facilitate the registration, as churches, of religious groups and enhance their independence. The amendments also call for a separate law on funerals. Under present practices, those not belonging to an established church often are subject to excessive burial expenses.

Instruction in the tenets of the state religions is incorporated into the curriculum of all public schools. However, students who are not members of the state churches may substitute general classes on religion and philosophy. The new amendments would allow parents or guardians belonging to other faiths/denominations to decide in what religion their children should be instructed.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In December 1998, the Education Ministry turned down the application of the Finnish Association of Scientologists to be registered as a religious community. This was the first time in the country's history that an applicant had been denied church status. The Scientologists' application had been pending for nearly 3 years while the Government awaited additional information that it had requested from the Association. In 1999, the Scientologists appealed the decision to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, who ruled that although the Education Ministry had made minor procedural errors its actions had been substantively correct under the law. The Education Ministry's decision may be appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court. The Scientologists have not yet done so but have indicated that they intend to begin the process to appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Active members of the state Lutheran Church attend services regularly, participate in small church group activities, and vote in parish elections. However, the majority of church members are only nominal members of the state church and do not participate actively. Their participation occurs mainly during occasions such as holidays, weddings, and funerals. The Lutheran Church's Information Center reports that in 1998, an estimated 2 percent of members attended church services weekly, and 10 percent attended monthly. The average number of visits to church by church members was 1.7 during 1998.

Some citizens are not very receptive to proselytizing by adherents of nontraditional faiths, in part due to the tendency to regard religion as a private matter.

Nontraditional religious groups practice their religions freely. They are generally free from discrimination despite intolerant attitudes from some members of society.

Immigrants do not encounter difficulties in practicing their faiths; however, they sometimes encounter random discrimination and xenophobia.

Various government programs available through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor focus on ongoing discrimination, including discrimination based on religion. Studies and research, integration programs, and recommendations for further incorporation of immigrants into society have been the focal points of these programs. Religion has not been highlighted in particular, but remains a part of the Government's overall attempts to combat discrimination.

The state churches often speak out in support of the Finnish/Nordic welfare state model, couching social welfare state values in religious or moral terms.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy promoting human rights. Embassy representatives periodically meet with representatives of the various religious communities (both mainstream and nontraditional) to discuss religious freedom issues.

FRANCE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government—including the legislative branch—has taken some actions that affect religious minorities that it considers to be “cults.” The 1905 law on the separation of church and state—the foundation of current legislation on religious freedom—makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, new legislation has the potential to restrict religious freedom. The new law provides for the dissolution of associations (including religious associations) whose leaders have two or more convictions on any of a variety of offenses, some of which are worded ambiguously, such as “psychological or physical subjection,” “fraudulent abuse of a state of ignorance or weakness,” “false advertising” or “fraud or falsifications.”

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. In October 2000, over 100 anti-Semitic incidents occurred, mainly as a result of increased tensions in the Middle East. Government leaders and representatives from the country's four main religious groups strongly criticized the violence, and the Government increased police security for Jewish institutions.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 211,210 square miles and its population is approximately 60 million.

The Government does not keep statistics on religious affiliation. The vast majority of the population is nominally Roman Catholic. According to one member of the Catholic hierarchy, only 8 percent of the population are practicing Catholics. Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in number; Islam has approximately 4 million adherents, or approximately 6 to 7 percent of the population. Protestants make up 2 percent of the population; and the Jewish and Buddhist faiths each represent 1 percent.

The Jewish community numbers between 600,000 and 700,000 persons and is divided among Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox groups. According to press reports, up to 60 percent of the Jewish community celebrates at most only the high holy days such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. One Jewish community leader has reported that the largest number of practicing Jews in the country is Orthodox. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that 250,000 persons attend their services either regularly or periodically. Orthodox Christians number between 80,000 and 100,000; the vast majority of these persons are associated with the Greek or Russian Orthodox churches. According to various estimates, about 6 percent of the country's citizens are unaffiliated.

Other religions present in the country include Evangelicals and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). Membership in Evangelical churches is growing due to increased participation by African and Antillian immigrants. Examples of minority religious groups include the Scientologists (membership estimates range from 5,000 to 20,000), the Raelians with approximately 20,000 members, the Association of the Triumphant Vajra, and the Order of the Solar Temple.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right; however, during the period covered by this report, the Government, including the legislative branch, took some actions that affected religious minorities that it considers cults. The 1905 law on the separation of church and state—the foundation of current legislation on religious freedom—makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith.

Organizations have to register and the Government uses many categories to describe associations. Two of these categories apply to religious groups: "Associations culturelles" (associations of worship, which are exempt from taxes) and "associations culturelles" (cultural associations, which are not exempt from taxes). Associations in these two categories are subject to certain management and financial disclosure requirements. An association of worship can organize only religious activities, defined as liturgical services and practices. A cultural association is a type of association whose goal is to promote the culture of a certain group, including a religious group. Although a cultural association is not exempt from taxes, it may receive government subsidies for its cultural and educational operations (such as schools). Religious groups normally use both of these categories; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, for example, runs strictly religious activities through its association of worship and operates a school under its cultural association.

Religious groups must apply with the local prefecture to be recognized as an association of worship and, therefore, receive tax-exempt status for their religious activities under the 1905 statute. The prefecture reviews the submitted documentation regarding the association's purpose for existence. In order to qualify, the group's purpose must be solely the practice of some form of religious ritual. Printing publications, employing a board president, or running a school can disqualify a group from receiving tax-exempt status.

According to statistics previously published by the Ministry of the Interior, 109 of 1,138 Protestant associations, 15 of 147 Jewish associations, and 2 of 1,050 Muslim associations have tax-free status. Roughly 100 Catholic associations are tax exempt; a representative of the Ministry of Interior reports that the total number of non-tax-exempt Catholic associations is too numerous to estimate accurately.

According to the 1905 law, associations of worship are not taxed on the donations that they receive. However, the prefecture can decide to review a group's status if the association receives a large donation or legacy that comes to the attention of the tax authorities. If the prefecture determines that the association is not in fact in conformity with the 1905 law, its status can be changed and it can be required to pay a 60 percent tax rate on present and past donations.

For historical reasons, the Jewish, Lutheran, Reformed (Protestant), and Roman Catholic groups in three departments of Alsace Lorraine enjoy special legal status in terms of taxation of individuals donating to these religious groups. Adherents of these four religions may choose to have a portion of their income tax allocated to their church in a system administered by the central Government.

Central or local governments own and maintain religious buildings constructed before 1905, the date of the law separating church and state. In Alsace and Moselle, special laws allow the local government to provide support for the building of religious edifices.

Foreign missionaries must obtain a 3-month tourist visa before leaving their own country. Upon arrival, missionaries must apply with the local prefecture for a carte

de sejour (a document that allows a foreigner to remain in the country for a given period of time), and then must give the prefecture a letter from their sponsoring religious organization.

Religion is not taught in public schools. Parents may home-school children for religious reasons, but all schooling must conform to the standards established for public schools. Public schools make an effort to supply special meals for students with religious dietary restrictions. The State subsidizes private schools, including those that are affiliated with churches.

Five of the country's 10 national holidays are Catholic holidays.

The Government has made efforts to promote interfaith understanding. Strict antidefamation laws prohibit racially or religiously motivated attacks. The Government has programs to combat racism and anti-Semitism through public awareness campaigns, and by encouraging dialog between local officials, police, and citizen groups. Following the numerous anti-Semitic incidents that occurred in October 2000, government leaders, along with representatives from the Jewish community, the Paris Grand Mosque, the Protestant Federation, and the French Conference on Bishops, came together to criticize the violence.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Following the 1994 mass suicide in Switzerland and Canada of members of the Order of the Solar Temple, successive Governments have encouraged public caution towards some minority religious groups that the Government may consider to be "cults." In 1995 the National Assembly formed a parliamentary commission to study so-called cults. In 1996 the Gest or Guyard Commission (named for its chairman and rapporteur, respectively) issued a report that identified 173 groups as cults, including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Theological Institute of Nimes (an evangelical Christian Bible college), and the Church of Scientology. The Commission, for purposes of its report only, defined sects as groups that place inordinate importance on finances; cause a rupture between adherents and their families; are responsible for physical as well as psychological attacks on members; recruit children; profess "anti-social" ideas; disturb public order; have "judiciary problems;" and/or attempt to infiltrate organs of the State. The Government has not outlawed any of the groups on the list; however, members of some of the groups listed have alleged instances of intolerance due to the ensuing publicity.

The Government's "Observatory on Sects/Cults" was created in 1996 to analyze the phenomenon of cults and to develop proposals for dealing with them. In 1998 the Government issued a decree disbanding the Observatory and creating an "Interministerial Mission in the Fight Against Sects/Cults" (MILS), which is responsible for coordinating periodic interministerial meetings at which government officials can exchange information and coordinate their actions. Although the Government instructed the MILS to analyze "the phenomenon of cults" its decree did not define the term "cult" or distinguish cults from religions.

On December 21, 2000, the MILS submitted its 2000 annual report. The report highlighted the globalization of cult influence, specifically in underdeveloped countries, and focused on the "infiltration" of NGO's by cults. The report evaluated the influence of cult movements in the country's three overseas departments, French Guyana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique. A case study examined the Anthroposophical Movement, founded by Rudolf Steiner, and recommended sustained vigilance over the Steiner schools.

On May 30, 2001, the National Assembly passed a private bill (known as the About-Picard Bill) that would tighten restrictions on organizations. The bill, already adopted by the Senate, was signed into law on June 14, 2001. The final legislation had been revised from earlier versions. It included the National Assembly's change stipulating that dissolution of any legal entity (including a religious association) that had been the subject of "several" criminal judgments would require a judicial decision (as opposed to a presidential decree). The About-Picard legislation does not define cults. Its framers worked from the concept of "cult-like movements" as those associations that put undue pressure on individuals, exact overly substantial contributions, encourage individuals not to vote, suggest anti-social behavior, and cut off individuals from their families. Articles of the legislation listed criminal activities for which a religious association (or other legal entity) would be subject to dissolution, including: endangering life or the physical/psychological well-being of a person; placing minors at mortal risk; violation of another person's freedom, dignity, or identity; the illegal practice of medicine or pharmacology; false advertising; and fraud or falsifications. Associations, recognized as public utilities, that defend or aid an individual or a collective entity against a person or organization that is characterized as having the goal or the effect of creating or exploiting a psychological or physical dependence, have standing in judicial proceedings.

In addition, the final text of the bill did not contain the controversial term “mental manipulation,” which had appeared in an earlier version of the legislation. However, the bill reinforces existing provisions of the Penal Code by adding language covering the exploitation of the “psychological or physical subjection” or “fraudulent abuse of a state of ignorance or weakness.” Government-supported language giving mayors the power to prevent cults from establishing a presence 200 meters or less from a school, hospice, or retirement home was struck from the final version. Leaders of the four major religions, such as the president of the French Protestant Federation and the president of the Conference of Bishops in France, raised concerns about the legislation. The Council of Europe issued a declaration on April 26, 2001, citing its concern that the legislation could be discriminatory and that it violates human rights standards. Many religious groups plan to monitor closely implementation of the new law, which some allege was inspired by government concerns over some religions.

Local authorities often determine the treatment of religious minorities. A number of court cases have been initiated against the Church of Scientology, generally involving former members who have sued the Church for fraud and sometimes for the practice of medicine without a license. According to Scientology representatives, there also have been cases under the Data Privacy Act brought against the group by former members who have continued to receive mailings from the parent church in the United States. In April 2001, the Church of Scientology was taken to court for fraud and false advertising in a lawsuit brought by three former members; the case was still pending at the end of the reporting period. Church of Scientology representatives report that a case filed by a parent whose child attended an “Applied Scholastics”-based school remained ongoing. Warrants in this case were executed in March 2001 and the police entered Scientology offices and removed files. Scientology representatives also report the cancellation of a music contract for a Scientology member allegedly due to her religious affiliation. In October 2000, the Paris Prefecture denied a request by the Church of Scientology for a demonstration permit. The Church alleged discrimination; however, the prefecture justified the denial based upon the proposed size and duration of the demonstration, which would make it difficult to maintain public order. The group rented a private park outside Paris, where they held their gathering.

The Association of the Triumphant Vajra has been involved in a dispute with local officials over a statue of the association’s guru, which was still pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Alleging unfair treatment on religious grounds, the Association mounted a public campaign and appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, to prevent application of a Court of Cassation (the country’s highest appeal body) ruling upholding a lower court order to tear down the statue, which allegedly had been erected without a permit.

Some observers are concerned about the scrutiny with which tax authorities have examined the financial records of some religious groups. The Government does not recognize all branches of Jehovah’s Witnesses, or the Church of Scientology, as qualifying religious associations for tax purposes, and therefore subjects them to a 60 percent tax on all funds they receive. The tax authorities began an audit in 1996 of the French Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses. In 1998 the tax authorities formally assessed the 60 percent tax on donations received between September 1992 and August 1996. Tax authorities then began proceedings to collect the assessed tax, including steps to place a lien on the property of the National Consistory of Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, in June 2000, the Conseil d’Etat, the highest administrative court in the country, decided that two of the branches of Jehovah’s Witnesses could be recognized as religious associations according to the 1905 law, and thus be exonerated from certain tax obligations. In July 2000, a Nanterre court decided against the French Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses. In the same month, the Jehovah’s Witnesses appealed the Nanterre court’s decision to the Versailles Court of Appeals. At the end of the period covered by this report, the case was still pending.

Problems experienced by Muslims appear to be based on cultural differences. Debate continues over whether denying some Muslim girls the right to wear headscarves in public schools constitutes a violation of the right to practice their religion. Various courts and government bodies have considered the question on a case-by-case basis; however there has been no definitive national decision on this issue.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 25,900 square miles and its population is 5 million.

Most ethnic Georgians (approximately 70 percent of the population of 5 million, according to the 1989 census nominally associate themselves with the Georgian Orthodox Church. Orthodox churches serving other non-Georgian ethnic groups, such as Russians and Greeks, are subordinate to the Georgian Orthodox Church. Non-Georgian Orthodox Churches generally use the language of their communicants. In addition, there are a small number of mostly ethnic Russian believers from two dissident Orthodox schools: the Malakani Storoveriy (Old Believers); and Dukhoboriy, the majority of whom have left the country. Under Soviet rule, the number of active churches and priests declined sharply and religious education was nearly nonexistent. Membership in the Georgian Orthodox Church has continued to increase since independence in 1991. The church maintains 4 theological seminaries, 2 academies, several schools, and 27 church dioceses; and has 700 priests, 250 monks, and 150 nuns. The Church is headed by a Catholicos Patriarch, Ilya II, whose See is in Tbilisi.

Several religions, including the Armenian Apostolic Church, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam, traditionally have coexisted with Georgian Orthodoxy. A large number of Armenians live in the southern Javakheti region, in which they constitute a majority of the population. Islam is prevalent among Azerbaijani and north Caucasus ethnic communities in the eastern part of the country and also is found in the regions of Ajara and Abkhazia. About 5 percent of the population are nominally Muslim. Judaism, which has been present since ancient times, is practiced in a number of communities throughout the country, especially in the largest cities of Tbilisi and Kutaisi. Approximately 8,000 Jews remain in the country, following 2 large waves of emigration, the first in the early 1970's and the second in the period of perestroika during the late 1980's. Before then, Jewish officials estimate, there were as many as 100,000 Jews in the country. There also are small numbers of Lutheran worshipers, mostly among descendants of German communities that first settled in the country several hundred years ago. A small number of Kurdish Yezidis have lived in the country for centuries.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Protestant denominations have become more prominent. They include Baptists (composed of Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Ossetian, and Kurdish groups); Seventh-Day Adventists; Pentecostals (both Georgian and Russian); Jehovah's Witnesses (local representatives state that the group has been in the country since 1953 and has about 15,000 adherents); the New Apostolic Church; and the Assemblies of God. There also are a few Baha'is and Hare Krishnas. There are no available membership numbers for these groups but, combined, their membership most likely totals fewer than 100,000 persons.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, local police and security officials at times harassed nontraditional religious minority groups and their foreign missionaries. The Constitution recognizes the special role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the country's history, but also stipulates the independence of the Church from the State.

There are no laws regarding the registration of religious organizations. Religious groups that perform humanitarian services may be registered as charitable organizations, although religious and other organizations may perform humanitarian services without registration. Organizations that are not registered may not rent office space or import literature, among other activities. Individual members of unregistered organizations may engage in these activities as individuals, but in such cases are exposed to personal legal liability.

While the National Security Council's human rights representative, the chairwoman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, and the Government Ombudsman have been effective advocates for religious freedom in a number of instances, the Ministry of Interior (including the police) and Procuracy generally have failed to pursue criminal cases against Orthodox extremists for their attacks against religious minorities. On the few occasions in which investigations into such attacks have been opened, they have proceeded very slowly.

During the Soviet era, the Georgian Orthodox Church largely was suppressed, as were many other religious institutions; many churches were destroyed or turned into museums, concert halls, and other secular establishments. As a result of new policies regarding religion implemented by the Soviet Government in the late 1980's,

the present Patriarch began reconsecrating churches formerly closed throughout the country. The Church remains very active in the restoration of these religious facilities and lobbies the Government for the return of properties that were held by the Church before the Bolshevik Revolution. (Church authorities have claimed that 20 to 30 percent of the land at one time belonged to the Church.)

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Georgian Orthodox Church enjoys a tax-exempt status not available to other religious groups. On March 30, 2001, Parliament amended the Constitution to allow for ultimate adoption of a concordat between the Church and the State, supported by the Church, which would define relations between the two. While a final concordat draft had not been completed by mid-2001, earlier versions covered several controversial topics, including transfer to the Church of ownership of church treasures expropriated during the Soviet period and currently held in state museums and repositories; government compensation to the Church for moral and material damage inflicted by the Soviets; and government assistance in establishing after-school Orthodox religious courses in educational institutions and Orthodox chaplaincies in the military and in prisons. The prospect of such a concordat has raised concerns among nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) that believe that it would discriminate against religious minorities. However, parliamentary leaders, have indicated that prior to adoption, the final concordat draft will be sent to the Council of Europe, European Parliament, and European Union for informal expert analysis, to ensure that it accords with European norms and the country's international legal obligations.

While most citizens practice their religion without restriction, the worship of some citizens, particularly members of non-traditional faiths, has been restricted by intimidation and the use of force by right-wing nationalists whom the Government has failed to control. In addition, a February 22, 2001, Supreme Court ruling upheld a lower court decision revoking the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses on the grounds that the law does not allow for registration of religious organizations. The effect of the Court decision likely will deprive Jehovah's Witnesses of the ability to rent premises for services and importing literature.

Some nationalist politicians continue to use the issue of the continued supremacy of the Georgian Orthodox Church in their platforms, and criticized some Protestant groups, especially evangelical groups, as subversive. Jehovah's Witnesses in particular are the target of attacks from such politicians.

The revocation of the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses resulted from a 1999 court case brought by a nationalist parliamentarian seeking to ban the group on the grounds that it presented a threat to the State and the Georgian Orthodox Church. A February 22, 2001, Supreme Court ruling upheld a June 2000, Appeals Court ruling revoking the Jehovah's Witnesses' legal registration. While the Supreme Court emphasized that its ruling was based on technical legal grounds and was not to have the effect of banning Jehovah's Witnesses, many local law enforcement officials interpreted the ruling as a ban, and thus used it as a justification not to protect Jehovah's Witnesses from attacks by religious extremists. However, the court decision did not have the effect of revoking the registration of other religious organizations, since the case was brought against Jehovah's Witnesses only.

In December 1999, Jehovah's Witnesses requested permission from the city of Tbilisi to use a municipal sports palace in July 2000 for a convention. In April 2000, the city denied permission. In conversations with group leaders, city officials claimed that the decision was based on concern for the safety of the attendees. Jehovah's Witnesses appealed this decision. The group speculates that the city denied permission due to fear of pressure from the Orthodox Church. The city has not responded to their appeal.

The Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches have been unable to secure the return of their churches and other facilities closed during the Soviet period, many of which later were given to the Georgian Orthodox Church by the State. A prominent Armenian church in Tbilisi remains closed and the Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches, as with Protestant denominations, have had difficulty obtaining permission to construct new churches, reportedly in part as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church.

The Jewish community also experienced delays in the return of property confiscated during Soviet rule. In 1997 the courts ordered that a former synagogue which had been rented from the Government by a theater group be returned to the Jewish community. The theater group refused to comply and began a publicity campaign with anti-Semitic overtones to justify its continued occupation of the building. In December 1998, President Shevardnadze promised Jewish leaders that the synagogue would be returned before the 2,600-year celebration of Jewish settlement in

the country. However, the President's order was not enforced, and the theater group brought suit, claiming that the building was never a synagogue. The court referred the issue to a panel of experts for evaluation. In May 2000, the panel informed the court that it had come to a split decision on whether the building had been a synagogue. On April 10, 2001, the Supreme Court ruled that the central hall of the synagogue should be returned to the Jewish community, but that the theater groups should retain part of the building. However, by the end of the period covered by this report, the theater group had not yet vacated the central hall.

On April 17, 2001, Jehovah's Witnesses representative Arno Tungler was denied an entry visa at Tbilisi Airport, despite the fact that he had an official accreditation from the Ministry of Justice. As of the end of the period covered by this report, Tungler still was unable to obtain permission to enter the country.

According to some local human rights groups, as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Ministry of Education prevented the use of several school textbooks on the history of religion because they did not give absolute precedence to Orthodox Christianity. The textbooks eventually were eventually published and introduced into the school system after the incorporation of changes requested by the Church. On a number of occasions, Jehovah's Witnesses encountered difficulty importing religious literature into the country. Shipments were delayed by the Customs Department for lengthy periods of time.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Local police and security officials at times harassed nontraditional religious minority groups, especially Jehovah's Witnesses. There were a number of cases in which police not only failed to intervene to protect such minorities from attacks by Orthodox extremists (see Section III), but actually participated in or facilitated the attacks.

On September 8, 2000, police broke up an assembly of 700 members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Zugdidi, after setting up roadblocks to prevent an additional 1,300 from reaching the site. More than 50 members of Jehovah's Witnesses were beaten.

On September 28, 2000, police raided a Hare Krishna meeting house in Tbilisi and confiscated a large amount of religious literature. Some of the literature was released following the intervention of a local NGO; however, the remainder of the literature was destroyed.

In March 2001, the Central Baptist Church in Tbilisi was attacked by five masked men. The five men tied up the night watchmen and used a blowtorch to force their way into the room, which all the church's valuables were kept in a safe. There has been no investigation into or prosecution of this incident.

Throughout the period covered by this report, followers of excommunicated Orthodox priest Basili Mkalavishvili (Basilists) engaged in a number of violent attacks on nontraditional religious minorities, including Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and especially, members of Jehovah's Witnesses. The attacks involved burning religious literature, breaking up religious gatherings, and beating up parishioners, in some cases with nail-studded sticks and clubs. Although law enforcement authorities were present during some of the attacks, in most instances, they have failed to intervene, leading to a widespread belief in police complicity in the activities of the Basilists. A criminal case was opened against Mkalavishvili in March 2000; however, the investigation is proceeding very slowly. While the criminal case prevented Mkalavishvili from making personal appearances during the most recent attacks, his followers have continued their violence in his absence. On occasion, members of Jvari (Cross), another Orthodox extremist group, have joined Mkalavishvili's supporters in their activities.

On September 15, 2000, Mkalavishvili and his followers destroyed the premises for a Jehovah's Witnesses conference in Marneuli and physically assaulted and robbed several dozen Jehovah's Witnesses while police looked on. Police also prevented a number of buses carrying Jehovah's Witnesses from reaching the conference. During December 2000 and January 2001, Basilists harassed several families of Jehovah's Witnesses, demanding that they stop holding meetings in their homes. On January 22, 2001, Mkalavishvili broke up a press conference in which Jehovah's Witnesses were presenting a petition with 130,000 signatures demanding government action against religious violence. Basilists seized and fled with most of the volumes of signatures. During April and May 2001, following the opening of a criminal case against Mkalavishvili, Basilists continued their attacks against members of Jehovah's Witnesses, which included several cases in which peaceful religious gatherings in Tbilisi, Rustavi, and other locales were broken up and Jehovah's Witnesses were beaten with sticks and clubs. Mkalavishvili publicly encouraged these latest attacks, although he did not participate due to fear of potential legal consequences.

On March 14, 2001, Basilists, with the assistance of traffic police, stopped a truck in Mtskheta carrying books imported by the United Bible Society and attempted to seize and burn them.

In May 2001, an appeals court overturned charges of hooliganism against a member of Jehovah's Witnesses and returned the case to the lower court for further investigation. This case began on October 1999, when a worship service of 120 parishioners in the Gldani district of Tbilisi was attacked violently by Basilists. The Gldani police refused to intervene. Sixteen persons were injured in the attack. In December 1999, the case was forwarded to the Gldani prosecutor's office for criminal charges. Despite the advocacy by the National Security Advisor for Human Rights on Jehovah's Witnesses' behalf, in January 2000, the Gldani regional prosecutor's office returned the case to the city prosecutor's office, stating that no violation had occurred. The case has been reopened and closed on several occasions since then. While it is currently open, the investigation is proceeding very slowly. In June 2000; however, the investigators charged two of the defendants with hooliganism stemming from the incident. They were convicted in court in September 2000, and received suspended sentences. One of the two appealed his conviction.

The Assemblies of God, several of whose members were beaten and abused verbally by police officials while conducting outdoor services in Tbilisi in May 1999, appealed to the European Court in Strasbourg. The police officials who interrupted the service sought to obtain the names of the church members. The Assemblies of God assert that it remains under local police surveillance. A number of members of the congregation were hesitant to return to their apartments and cars for a few days after the police actions. In September 1999 the group brought suit against the police and lost. The group alleged that the leader of a radical Orthodox group exerted pressure on the court. The suit was later appealed to the Supreme Court, which dismissed it in 2000. The group then appealed to the European Court, where the case remained pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Despite this lack of legal redress there have been no reports that the Assemblies of God or the other three evangelical Protestant congregations in Tbilisi whose public services were discontinued for a period in 1999 due to interference from police and Basilists, have experienced further interference with public worship services. President Shevardnadze publicly condemned these acts, but there have been no investigations into the police conduct.

Regular and reliable information regarding the "Republic of Abkhazia," which is not recognized by any country and over which the Government of Georgia does not exercise control, is difficult to obtain. The Abkhaz "President," Vladislav Ardzimba, issued a decree in 1995 that banned Jehovah's Witnesses in Abkhazia. It remains in effect. A number of members of Jehovah's Witnesses have been detained subsequently; however, according to a representative of Jehovah's Witnesses, none were in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners in the area of the country under the control of the Government.

Forced Religious Conversion

There are 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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The public's attitude towards religion is ambivalent. Although many residents are not particularly observant, the link between Georgian Orthodoxy and Georgian ethnic and national identity is strong.

Despite their tolerance toward minority religious groups traditional to the country—including Catholics, Armenian Apostolic Christians, Jews, and Muslims—citizens remain very apprehensive about Protestants and other nontraditional religions, which they see as taking advantage of the populace's economic hardship by gaining membership through handing out economic assistance to converts.

The Georgian Orthodox Church withdrew its membership from the World Council of Churches in 1997 in order to appease clerics strongly opposed to some of the Council's requirements and methods of operation and thereby avert a schism within the Church. Some senior church leaders remain highly exclusionary and profess theirs as the "one true faith." Some Protestant groups—especially evangelical groups—have been criticized by church officials and nationalist politicians as subversive. Eleven leaders of the Georgian Orthodox Church have argued that Christian missionaries should confine their activities to non-Christian areas.

Religious leaders of different faiths have spoken out against such criticism. Some NGO's advocate removing the clause in the Constitution concerning the Church's special role, claiming that it contradicts the Constitution's provisions regarding religious freedom.

The Muslim and Jewish communities report that they have encountered few societal problems. There is no pattern of anti-Semitism. In the past, President Shevardnadze has made statements criticizing anti-Semitic acts.

Nationalistic politicians manipulated the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in order to create public hostility. In April 2000, one politician inaccurately publicized the case of a hospitalized member of Jehovah's Witnesses who refused certain forms of medical treatment. The event was covered widely in the press and sparked a brief public debate over religious beliefs and medical ethics.

Many of the problems among traditional religious groups stem from disputes over property. The Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches have been unable to secure the return of their churches and other facilities that were closed during the Soviet period, many of which later were given to the Georgian Orthodox Church by the State. A prominent Armenian church in Tbilisi remains closed and the Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches, with Protestant denominations, have had difficulty obtaining permission to construct new churches, reportedly in part as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church. Georgian Orthodox Church authorities have accused Armenian believers of purposely altering some existing Georgian churches so that they would be mistaken for Armenian churches. The Catholic Church successfully completed the construction of a new church in Tbilisi in 1999 and one in Batumi in June 2000.

On March 6, 2001, four Orthodox priests led a mob in an attack on members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sachkere. The mayor and local police chief refused to intervene, and local law enforcement officials warned that there would be further attacks.

On March 24, 2001, eight visiting foreign Assembly of God members were attacked by a mob of Basilists, who stole their camera equipment and inflicted minor injuries upon them. Police reportedly were present and watching but made no effort to intervene.

On June 8, 2001, a mob of 30 Orthodox priests attacked Jehovah's Witnesses during a meeting in the western city of Martvili. The mob assaulted two women, beating one with a stick and striking the other in the face while the priests looked on.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialogue and policy of promoting human rights. On several occasions during the period covered by this report, senior U.S. Government officials, including the Ambassador and the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, raised with senior government officials, including the President, Parliament Speaker, and Internal Affairs and Justice Ministers. U.S. Government concerns regarding harassment of and attacks against nontraditional religious minorities. The Ambassador also raised this issue with the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Embassy officials frequently met with representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptist Church, and Assemblies of God, as well as with NGO's concerned with religious freedom.

GERMANY

The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government does not recognize Scientology as a religion and views it as an economic enterprise. Concerns that Scientology's ideology is opposed to a democratic state have led to the screening of firms and individuals in some sectors of business and employment.

The federal and state Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (OPC), "watchdog" agencies tasked with monitoring groups whose ideologies are deemed to be counter to the democratic order, have been "investigating" the Church of Scientology and Scientologists for approximately 4 years. During that time there have been no prosecutions or convictions of Scientology officials in the country, and the investigation has uncovered no concrete evidence that the Church is a "security" threat.

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. Many religions and denominations have been

granted public law corporation status. Among them are the Lutheran and Catholic Churches and Judaism, as well as the Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mennonites, Baptists, Methodists, Christian Scientists, and the Salvation Army. The Berlin State government has denied Jehovah's Witnesses public law corporation status (see Section II).

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The status of Scientology was the subject of many discussions. The U.S. Government has maintained consistently that the determination that any organization is religious is for the organization itself. The U.S. Government has expressed concerns over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation and over the potential for discrimination in international trade posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible affiliation with Scientology.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 137,821 square miles and its population is approximately 82 million. No census that could provide official statistics on religions has been conducted since 1987. However, unofficial estimates and figures provided by the organizations themselves give an approximate breakdown of the current membership of the country's denominations. The Evangelical Church, which includes the Lutheran, Uniate, and Reformed Protestant Churches, has 27 million members, who constitute 33 percent of the population. Statistical offices in the Church estimate that 1.1 million church members (or 4 percent) attend weekly religious services. The Catholic Church has a membership of 27.2 million or 33.4 percent of the population. According to the Church's statistics, 4.8 million Catholics (or 17.5 percent) actively participate in weekly services. According to government estimates, there are approximately 2.8 to 3.2 million Muslims living in the country (about 3.4 percent to 3.9 percent of the population.) Statistics on mosque attendance are not available.

Orthodox churches have approximately 1.1 million members, or 1.3 percent of the population. The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest, with approximately 450,000 members. The Romanian Orthodox Church has 300,000 members. The Serbian Orthodox Church has 200,000 members. The Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate has 50,000 members, while the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has approximately 28,000 members. The Syrian Orthodox Church has 37,000 members, and the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in Germany has 35,000 members.

Other Christian churches have approximately 1 million members, or 1.2 percent of the population. These include Adventists with 35,000 members, the Apostolate of Jesus Christ with 18,000 members, the Apostolate of Judah with 2,800 members, the Apostolic Community with 8,000 members, Baptists with 87,000 members, the Christian Congregation with 12,000 members, the Church of Jesus Christ or Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) with 39,000, the Evangelical Brotherhood in Germany with 7,200 members, Jehovah's Witnesses with 165,000 members, Mennonites with 6,500 members, Methodists with 66,000 members, the New Apostolic Church with 430,000 members, Old Catholics with 25,000 members, the Salvation Army with 2,000 members, Seventh-Day Adventists with 53,000 members, the Union of Free Evangelical churches with 30,500 members, the Union of Free Pentecostal Communities with 16,000 members, the Temple Society with 250 members, and the Quakers with 335 members.

Jewish congregations have approximately 82,000 members and make up 0.1 percent of the population. According to press reports, the country's Jewish population is growing rapidly, and more than 100,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union have joined the country's 30,000 Jews since 1990. The vast majority of newly arrived Jews come from countries of the former Soviet Union. Not all new arrivals join congregations, hence the discrepancy between population numbers and the number of congregation members. Statistics on synagogue attendance are not available.

The Unification Church has 850 members; the Church of Scientology has 8,000 members; the Hare Krishna society has 5,000 members; the Johannish Church has 3,500 members; the International Grail Movement has 2,300 members; Ananda Marga has 3,000 members; and Sri Chinmoy has 300 members.

Approximately 21.8 million persons or 26.6 percent of the population either have no religious affiliation or belong to unrecorded religious organizations.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

Religious organizations need not be registered. Most religious organizations are registered and treated as nonprofit associations and therefore enjoy tax-exempt status. State level authorities review these submissions and routinely grant this status. Organizations must register at a local or municipal court and provide evidence (through their own statutes) that they are a religion and thus contribute socially, spiritually, or materially to society. Local tax offices occasionally conduct reviews of tax-exempt status.

Church and State are separate, although historically a special partnership exists between the State and those religious communities that have the status of a "corporation under public law." If they fulfill certain requirements, including assurance of permanence, size of the organization, and no indication that the organization is not loyal to the State, organizations may request that they be granted "public law corporation" status, which, among other things, entitles them to levy taxes on their members that are collected by the State for them. Organizations pay a fee to the Government for this service. All public law corporations do not avail themselves of this privilege. The decision to grant public law corporation status is made at the state level. On December 19, 2000, the Federal Constitutional Court passed a groundbreaking ruling in which it found the condition of "loyalty to the state" to be a violation of the constitutionally mandated separation of church and state. Therefore, this condition is inadmissible in the catalogue of conditions imposed on religious organizations. State governments also subsidize various institutions affiliated with public law corporations, such as church-run schools and hospitals.

State subsidies are also provided to some religious organizations for historical and cultural reasons. Some Jewish synagogues have been built with state financial assistance because of the State's role in the destruction of synagogues in 1938 and throughout the Nazi period. Repairs to and restoration of some Christian churches and monasteries are undertaken with state financial support because of the expropriation by the State of church lands in 1803 during the Napoleonic period. Having taken from the churches the means by which they earned money to repair their buildings, the State recognized an obligation to cover the cost of those repairs. Subsidies are paid out only to those buildings affected by the 1803 Napoleonic reforms. Newer buildings do not receive subsidies for upkeep.

In principle, the Central Council of Jews in Germany represents the majority of Jewish congregations in the country. However, since the founding of the first liberal congregations in the country in 1997, there are now 11 liberal/reform congregations that are represented by the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (UPJGAS), which is not represented on the Central Council. The UPJGAS is currently looking to establish a dialog with the Central Council and the Government in order to secure access to federal and state funds allocated for the purpose of development, support, and stability of all German Jewish congregations. Such funds are currently managed through contracts between the 16 states and the state-level Jewish umbrella organizations, which constitute the Central Council.

Most public schools offer religious instruction in cooperation with the Protestant and Catholic churches and will offer instruction in Judaism if enough students express interest. A nonreligious ethics course or study hall generally is available for students not wishing to participate in religious instruction. The issue of Islamic education in public schools is becoming increasingly topical in several states. In February 2000, the Federal Administrative Court upheld previous court rulings that the Islamic Federation qualified as a religious community and thus must be given the opportunity to provide religious instruction in Berlin schools. The decision drew criticism from the many Islamic organizations not represented by the Islamic Federation. The Berlin State Government has expressed its concerns about the Islamic Federation's alleged links to Milli Gorus, a Turkish group classified as extremist by the Federal OPC. In November 2000, Bavaria announced that it would offer German-language Islamic education in its public schools starting in 2003.

The right to provide religious chaplaincies in the military, in hospitals, and in prisons is not dependent on the public law corporation status of a religious community. The Ministry of Defense currently is looking into the possibility of Islamic clergymen providing religious services in the military, although none of the many Islamic communities has the status of a corporation under public law.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Jehovah's Witnesses appealed to the Constitutional Court a 1993 decision of the Berlin State government that had denied the church public law corporation status. In 1997 the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin had upheld the Berlin State Government's decision. The Court concluded that the group did not offer the "indispensable loyalty" towards the democratic state "essential for lasting cooperation" because it forbade its members from participating in public elections. The group does enjoy the basic tax-exempt status afforded to most religious organizations. On December 19, 2000, the Constitutional Court found in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses, remanding the case back to the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin. For the first time, the Constitutional Court had examined the conditions for granting the status of a public law corporation and found that for reasons of the separation of church and state, "loyalty to the state" cannot be a condition imposed on religious communities. The Constitutional Court tempered the victory for Jehovah's Witnesses by instructing the Berlin Administrative Court to examine whether Jehovah's Witnesses use coercive methods to prevent their members from leaving the congregation and whether their child-rearing practices conform to the country's human rights standards. The case had not been resolved by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Rheinland-Pfalz Superior Court (OVG) ruled in November 2000 that the German Unification Church (Moon Community) was permitted to contest an immigration order prohibiting its leader's entrance into the country. The court also left open an appeal by either the immigration authorities or the Unification Church to the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin because of the significance of the matter. The Unification Church was registered as an association in 2000.

A state's administrative court upheld on June 26, 2001 a 1998 ban in the southern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg on Muslim teachers wearing headscarves in the classroom. The case is expected to be appealed to the Federal Administrative Court.

On October 16, 2000, the Administrative Court in Lueneburg, Lower Saxony, ruled for the plaintiff. The court found that school authorities have to admit the teacher into probationary civil service status. This court found that wearing a headscarf does not constitute cause for denial of employment. An administrative court in Hamburg had already come to a similar finding in 1999. In Baden-Wuerttemberg, on the other hand, school authorities have won a case against a teacher who insists on wearing her headscarf. This case is now being appealed in a higher administrative court in Mannheim.

Several states have published pamphlets detailing the ideology and practices of nonmainstream religions. States defend the practice by noting their responsibility to respond to citizens' requests for information about these groups. While many of the pamphlets are factual and relatively unbiased, others may harm the reputations of some groups through innuendo and inclusion in a report covering known dangerous cults or movements. Scientology is the focus of many such pamphlets, some of which warn of alleged dangers posed by Scientology to the political order and freemarket economic system, and to the mental and financial well being of individuals. For example, the Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution published "The Intelligence Service of the Scientology Organization," which outlines its claim that Scientology tried to infiltrate governments, offices, and companies, and that the church spies on its opponents, defames them, and "destroys" them.

The Church of Scientology remained under scrutiny by both federal and state officials who contend that its ideology is opposed to democracy. Since 1997 Scientology has been under observation by federal and state offices. (One state, Schleswig-Holstein, does not implement observation, since its constitution does not permit such activity.) In observing an organization, OPC officials seek to collect information, mostly from written materials and firsthand accounts, to assess whether a "threat" exists. More intrusive methods would be subject to legal checks and would require evidence of involvement in treasonous or terrorist activity. Federal OPC authorities stated that no requests had been made to employ more intrusive methods, nor were any such requests envisioned. Observation is not an investigation into criminal wrongdoing, and, to date, no criminal charges have been brought against the Church of Scientology by the Government.

In November 1998, the Federal OPC concluded that although there was no imminent danger of infiltration by Scientology into high levels of the political or economic power structures, there were nevertheless indications of tendencies within Scientology, supported by its ideology and programmatic goals, which could be seen as directed against the country's free and democratic order and that the public should be informed of these dangers.

The interministerial group of midlevel federal and state officials that exchanges information on Scientology-related issues continued its periodic meetings. The group

published no report or policy compendium during the period covered by this report and remains purely consultative in purpose.

In April 2001, the Federal OPC concluded in a 265 page annual report for the year 2000 that its reasons for initiating observation of Scientology stated in 1997 were still valid. The 5 pages (down from 6 last year) covering Scientology described the organization's political ideology that is deemed to be antidemocratic, quoting from the writings of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology pamphlets.

Government authorities contend that Scientology is not a religion but an economic enterprise and therefore sometimes have sought to deregister Scientology organizations previously registered as nonprofit associations and require them to register as commercial enterprises. With the exception of the Church of Scientology in Baden-Wuerttemberg, no Scientology organization in the country has tax-exempt status.

Until March 2001, the Government required firms to sign a declaration (a "sect filter") in bidding on government contracts stating that neither the firm's management nor employees were Scientologists. Firms that failed to submit a sect filter declaration were presumed "unreliable" and excluded from consideration. In response to concerns expressed by foreign governments and multinational firms unable to determine the religious affiliation of all their employees, the Economics Ministry limited the scope of the sect filter to consulting and training contracts in 2000. In March 2001, the Economics Ministry was able to persuade the federal and state interior ministries to accept new wording that would only prohibit use of the "technology of L. Ron Hubbard" in executing government contracts. Firms owned or managed by or employing Scientologists could bid on these contracts.

Scientologists continued to report discrimination because of their beliefs. A number of state and local offices share information on individuals known to be Scientologists. Some local and state government offices and businesses (including major international corporations) and other organizations also require job applicants and bidders on contracts to sign a "sect filter," stating that they are not affiliated with the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard and do not use the technologies of L. Ron Hubbard. (The term "sect filter" is misleading because the declarations are Scientology-specific and in practice do not refer to any other group; they could more accurately be described as "Scientology filters.") Some state governments also screen companies bidding contracts relating to training and the handling and processing of personal data. The private sector has followed the example set by the Federal Government and on occasion has required foreign firms that wish to do business in the country to declare any affiliation that they or their employees may have with Scientology. The Federal Property Office has barred the sale of some real estate to Scientologists, noting that the federal Finance Ministry has urged that such sales be avoided, if possible.

Scientologists reported employment difficulties and, in the State of Bavaria, applicants for state civil service positions must complete questionnaires detailing any relationship they may have with Scientology. Bavaria identified some state employees as Scientologists and has required them to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire specifically states that the failure to complete the form will result in the employment application not being considered. Some of these employees have refused and two have filed suit in the local administrative court. The two cases have been decided, both in favor of Scientology. The first case was an employee who had been employed with the city of Munich since 1990, and who refused to complete the questionnaire. The Labor Court ruled in his favor in October 2000. The second case was that of a state employee (originally employed in 1992) who had filed suit against the Bavarian State. In April 2001, the Labor Court ruled in his favor. These were the only cases actually brought to court. Others refused to complete the questionnaire, but chose to await rulings in the two mentioned cases. The Bavarian Interior Ministry commented that these were "individual" decisions, but it withdrew the questionnaire for people already employed with the State of Bavaria or the City of Munich. However, the questionnaire is still in use for persons seeking new state or municipal employment. In one case, a person was not given civil service but only employee status (a distinction which involves important differences in levels of benefits); in another case, a person quit Scientology in order not to jeopardize his career. Two teachers who had also refused to comply with the questionnaire requirement meanwhile got word that due to the latest court ruling they no longer need comply. According to Bavarian and federal officials, no one in Bavaria lost a job or was denied employment solely because of association with Scientology; Scientology officials confirm this fact. An antidrug exhibition on display in Munich in the spring of 2001 was hosted by Scientology. Neither state nor municipal authorities lodged any opposition to this exhibit. There were, however, counter-demonstrations and minor problems with the police.

In a well-publicized court case, a higher social court in Rheinland-Pfalz ruled in January 1999 that a Scientologist was allowed to run her au pair agency, for which the state labor ministry had refused to renew her license in 1994, solely based on her Scientology membership. The judge ruled that the question of a person's reliability hinges on the person herself and not on her membership in the Church of Scientology. The ruling is under appeal by the State Labor Office. The case is still in the appeals process.

The publisher "New Era," who had caused controversy during the Leipzig Book Fair of 2000, did not participate in the 2001 Fair. According to Fair organizers, no publishers associated with the Church of Scientology exhibited their books at this year's Fair.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country is becoming increasingly secular. Regular attendance at religious services is decreasing. After over four decades of Communist rule, the eastern part of the country had become far more secular than the western part. Church representatives note that only 5 to 10 percent of eastern inhabitants belong to a religious organization.

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable. Several major political parties generally hold ecumenical religious services prior to beginning their national conventions. Religious organizations and political and educational foundations hold seminars and discussion panels to promote interreligious understanding.

Religious broadcasters have access to the media. For example, television carries many programs produced by mainstream and minority religious groups.

With an estimated 4 million adherents, Islam is the third most commonly practiced religion in the country (after Catholicism and Lutheranism). All branches of Islam are represented, with the vast majority of Muslims coming from a large number of other countries. This has, at times, led to societal discord, such as local resistance to the construction of mosques or disagreements over whether Muslims can use loudspeakers in residential neighborhoods to call the faithful to prayer. There also remain areas where German law conflicts with Islamic practices or raises religious freedom issues. In November 2000, the Government published a comprehensive report on "Islam in Germany" which examined these issues in response to an inquiry from parliament.

Opposition to the construction of mosques was reported in various communities around the country. In August 2000, for instance, a protest movement in the Stuttgart suburb of Heslach tried to prevent the construction of a mosque, claiming that the planned building did not fit into the community. The city offered the Islamic organization an alternative location, which the group declined. Subsequently, the city denied a construction permit. The dispute remains unresolved.

There is also a case of a planned mosque in the Frankfurt suburb of Roedelheim. Neighbors have expressed concerns about an increase in traffic if visitors come to attend services at the mosque. Newspaper reports of open opposition to the project voiced at citizen meetings with the city administration. Leading city officials seem to support the construction of the mosque, but the case is still pending.

The right of Muslims ritually to slaughter animals was the subject of two court cases during the year. In November 2000, the Federal Administrative Court ruled that the Islamic Community of Hesse was not a religious community as provided for in Germany's animal protection laws and could not, therefore, receive a waiver of laws requiring an animal be stunned before slaughter. The Court did not rule on whether Islam prescribes the exclusive consumption of ritually slaughtered meat, noting that such decisions were beyond the scope of the courts. A similar case was heard by the Federal Constitutional Court and a decision was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

A report of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, published during the period covered by this report, does not distinguish violent crimes by the religious affiliation of the victims. Specific mention is made of the desecration of Jewish graves or cemeteries. The report lists 56 such cases (up from 47 last year.)

On April 20, 2000 (the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birthday), three young men affiliated with a radical rightwing organization threw a Molotov cocktail at the synagogue in Erfurt. No one was injured and the damage was minor. The perpetrators

were rapidly apprehended. On July 13, 2000, they were convicted of aggravated arson. Two perpetrators were sentenced to juvenile detention of 3 months and 2 years respectively. The driver of the getaway car was sentenced to probation. The overwhelming majority of the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts were socially marginalized, largely apolitical youths and a small core of rightwing extremists.

On July 27, 2000, an explosive device was detonated at a Düsseldorf train station, injuring ten persons, most of whom were Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. Despite intensive police investigation, as of June 30, 2001 the case, which authorities considered a possible hate crime, had not been solved.

In October 2000, Molotov cocktails thrown at the synagogue in Düsseldorf caused slight damage to the building. In December 2000, police charged two young men of Arab origin with the attack. Police found Nazi symbols and related items in the suspects' homes. The synagogue has remained under around-the-clock police protection since the incident.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

The status of Scientology was the subject of many discussions. The U.S. Government has expressed its concerns over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation, and over the potential for discrimination in international trade posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible Scientology affiliation. U.S. Government officials have discussed with state and federal authorities U.S. concerns about the violation of individual rights posed by the use of declarations of Scientology affiliation. U.S. officials frequently have made the point that the use of such "filters" to prevent persons from practicing their professions, solely based on their beliefs, is an abuse of their rights, as well as a discriminatory business practice.

GREECE

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the "prevailing" religion, but also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice; however, while the Government generally respects this right, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles or encounter legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that no rite of worship may disturb public order or offend moral principles.

Overall, leaders of minority religions noted a general improvement in government tolerance during the period covered by this report, citing fewer detentions for proselytizing; the conscientious objector law; and an effective, well-run Ombudsman's office, which successfully handled an increasing number of cases.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity. In the minds of many Greeks, an ethnic Greek is also Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation. The Government's decision in the summer of 2000 to remove a notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards sparked a national debate, which is still continuing, on the role of the Church in Greek society.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officers meet regularly with working-level officials responsible for religious affairs in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education and Religious Affairs. Officers from the U.S. Embassy and the Consulate General in Thessaloniki also meet regularly with representatives of various religious groups, including the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic communities.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 81,934.74 square miles and its population is approximately 10.9 million. Approximately 94 to 97 percent of the population identify themselves at least nominally with the Greek Orthodox faith. There are approximately 500,000 to 800,000 Old Calendarists throughout the country. With the exception of the Muslim community (some of whose rights and privileges as well as related government obligations are covered by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne), the

Government does not keep statistics on the size of religious groups; and the 2001 census did not ask for religious affiliation. Ethnic Greeks account for a sizeable percentage of most non-Orthodox religions. The balance of the population is composed of Muslims (officially estimated at 98,000, though some Muslims claim up to 130,000 to 140,000 countrywide); accurate figures for other religious groups are not available. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses are estimated at 50,000; Catholics at 50,000; Protestants, including evangelicals, at 30,000; Jews at 5,000; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) at 300. Scientologists claim 12,000 members, a figure observers believe to be high. The Jewish community numbers approximately 5,000 adherents; the majority are Greek citizens and live in the Athens and Thessaloniki regions. Approximately 250 members of the Baha'i Faith are scattered throughout the country, the majority of whom are Greek citizens of non-Greek ethnicity. There are also small populations of Anglicans, Baptists, and nondenominational Christians. There is no official or unofficial estimate of atheists.

The majority of noncitizen residents are not Greek Orthodox. The largest of these groups is the Albanians (approximately 700,000 including legal and illegal residents); of them, a few are Orthodox and Roman Catholics, but the majority are non-religious.

Greek Catholics reside particularly in Athens and on the islands of Syros, Tinos, Naxos, and Corfu, as well as in the cities of Thessaloniki and Patras. Immigrants from the Philippines and Poland also practice Catholicism. The Bishop of Athens heads the Roman Catholic Holy Synod.

Some religious groups, such as the evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses, consist almost entirely of ethnic Greeks. Other groups, such as the Church of Jesus of Latter-Day Saints and Anglicans, consist of an approximately equal number of ethnic Greeks and non-Greeks.

The Muslim population, concentrated in western Thrace with small communities in Rhodes, Kos, and Athens, is composed mainly of ethnic Turks but also includes Pomaks and Roma.

Scientologists, most of whom are located in the Athens area, practice their faith through a registered nonprofit philosophical organization.

Foreign Missionary groups are active in the country, including Protestants and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; the latter states that it has approximately 80 missionaries in the country each year, for approximately 2-year terms.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the prevailing religion, but also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice; however, while the Government generally respects this right, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles, or encounter legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that no rite of worship may disturb public order or offend moral principles. The Orthodox Church wields significant political and economic influence. The Government, under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Religion, provides some financial support by, for example, paying for the salaries and religious training of clergy, and financing the construction and maintenance of Orthodox Church buildings.

The Orthodox Church and the Jewish and Muslim religions are the only groups considered by law to be a "legal person of public law." Other religions are considered "legal persons of private law." In practice the primary distinction is that the establishment of "houses of prayer" of religions other than the Orthodox Church, Judaism, or Islam is regulated by the general provisions of the Civil Code regarding corporations. For example, these religions cannot, as religious entities, own property; the property must belong to a specifically created legal entity rather than to the church itself. In practice this places an additional legal and administrative burden on non-Orthodox religious community organizations, although in most cases this process has been handled routinely. Members of minority religious groups that are classified as private entities also cannot be represented in court as religious entities and cannot will or inherit property as a religious entity. In July 1999, the Parliament passed a law extending legal recognition to Catholic churches and related entities established prior to 1946. By virtue of the Orthodox Church's status as the "prevailing" religion, the Government recognizes the Orthodox Church's canon law (the official statutes of the Church). However, the Catholic Church unsuccessfully has sought government recognition of its canon law since 1999.

Two laws from the 1930's require recognized or "known" religious groups to obtain "house of prayer" permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship. By law the Ministry may base its decision to issue permits on the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop. No formal mechanism exists to gain recognition as a known religion, but Ministry officials state that they no longer obtain the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop when considering house of prayer permit applications. According to the Ministry's officials, applications for additional houses of prayer are numerous and are approved routinely; however, in October 2000 the Ministry denied the Scientologists of Greece their application for recognition and a house of prayer permit on the grounds that Scientology "is not a religion." The only recent application for recognition as a known religion at the Ministry was submitted in February 2000 by the Scientologists of Greece. Although the deadline mandated by law for processing the applications is 3 months, it took the Ministry until October 2000 to decide that it would not recognize the Scientologist community as an "official" religion. The Church of Scientology appealed the decision with the Council of State in December 2000 and the case will be heard in December 2001.

Leaders of some non-Orthodox religious groups claimed that all taxes on religious organizations were discriminatory, even those that the Orthodox Church has to pay, since the Government subsidizes the Orthodox Church, while other groups are self-supporting. The Government also pays the salaries of the two official Muslim religious leaders ("muftis") in western Thrace and provides them with official vehicles.

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which is still in force, gives Muslims in western Thrace the right to maintain social and charitable organizations ("wakfs") and provides for muftis (Islamic judges and religious leaders with limited civic responsibilities) to render religious judicial services.

The Treaty of Lausanne provides that the Muslim minority has the right to Turkish-language education, with a reciprocal entitlement for the Greek minority in Istanbul (now reduced to approximately 3,000 persons). Western Thrace has both Koranic and secular Turkish-language schools. In the past, government disputes with Turkey over teachers and textbooks had caused these secular schools serious problems in obtaining faculty and teaching materials in sufficient number and quality; however, this is no longer a problem. In January 2000, 19 new Turkish-language textbooks approved jointly by the Governments of Greece and Turkey were distributed in the schools, the first such distribution since 1974. There were no complaints during the period covered by this report that the Government tried to prevent Turkish teachers (who serve under a 1952 reciprocal educational protocol) from performing their duties. Approximately 8,000 Muslim children attended Turkish-language public schools and an additional 150 attended two bilingual middle schools with a religious curriculum. Approximately 600 Muslim students attended Turkish-language secondary schools, and approximately 1,600 Muslim students attended Greek-language secondary schools. Some Muslims, especially in western Thrace, reportedly attended high school in Turkey; places in Turkish language secondary schools are no longer assigned by lottery, as the number of those wanting to attend has been less than the places available. In 1999 the Government instituted a European Union-funded program for teaching Greek as a second language to Muslim children, primarily in the Greek-language schools, to improve their academic performance and chances of obtaining post-secondary education in Greece.

Government incentives encourage Muslim and Christian educators to reside and teach in isolated villages. However, in August 1999, the Ministry of Education reformed the hiring system for teachers, which previously was based on seniority and prior service as a temporary teacher. As a result, Christian educators lost the incentive to reside and teach temporarily in isolated and border villages, which in the past secured priority in hiring. However, teachers and civil servants in border areas continue to receive a special allowance and pay lower taxes.

The law permits the Minister of Education to give special consideration to Muslims for admission to universities and technical institutes. The law requires universities and technical institutes to set aside places for Muslim students each year.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On October 17, 2000, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs rejected the application of the Scientologists of Greece for recognition and a house of prayer permit on the grounds that Scientology "is not a religion." The Scientologists had re-applied for a house of prayer permit in late February 2000 in a step toward gaining recognition as a religion. According to the president of the Greek Scientologists, the group chose previously to register as a philosophical organization because legal counsel advised that the Government would not recognize Scientology as a religion.

The Scientologists appealed the ministry decision with the Council of State and the case is scheduled to be heard in December 2001.

Minority religious groups have requested that the Government abolish laws regulating house of prayer permits, which are required in order to open houses of worship. Many provisions of these laws are not applied in practice, but local police still have the authority to bring minority churches to court that operate or build places of worship without a permit. On December 12, 2000, in Thessaloniki, 16 churches charged with operating without a house of prayer permit were acquitted.

Several religious denominations reported difficulties in dealing with the authorities on a variety of administrative matters. Privileges and legal prerogatives granted to the Greek Orthodox Church are not extended routinely to other recognized religions. The non-Greek Orthodox churches must make separate and lengthy applications to government authorities on such matters as gaining permission to move places of worship to larger facilities. In contrast Greek Orthodox officials have an institutionalized link between the church hierarchy and the Ministry of Education and Religion to handle administrative matters.

Non-Orthodox citizens have claimed that they face career limits within the military, police, and fire-fighting forces, and the civil service, due to their religions. In the military, generally only members of the Greek Orthodox faith become officers, leading some members of other faiths to declare themselves Orthodox. Few Muslim officers have advanced to the rank of reserve officer, and there were reports of pressure exerted on Greek Orthodox military personnel not to marry in the religious ceremony of their non-Orthodox partner, lest they be passed over for promotion.

The percentage of Muslims employed in the public sector and in state-owned industries and corporations is disproportionately lower than the percentage of Muslims in the population, which many observers claim is due to the Greek language barrier, not to religious discrimination. In Xanthi and Komotini, while Muslims hold seats on the prefectural and town councils, there are no Muslims among regular employees of the prefecture. Muslims in western Thrace claim that they are hired only for lower level, part-time work. According to the Government, lack of fluency in written and spoken Greek and the need for university degrees for high-level positions limit the number of Muslims eligible for government jobs.

Economically, the Muslim minority in Thrace lags behind the rest of the population. Since 1998, there have been no claims of discriminatory denial of Muslim applications for business licenses, tractor ownership, or property construction. In fact, Muslims and Christians in Thrace commended the Government for the basic public services (electricity, water, and telephone) provided to Muslim villages in recent years.

Unlike in the past, there were no reports during the period covered by this report of assertions by Muslim leaders that the Government routinely withheld permission from Muslims seeking to change their legal residence, which determines where they vote, from rural to urban communities within western Thrace or from elsewhere in Greece to Thrace.

Several religious denominations, including foreign Protestants and Mormons, reported difficulty in renewing the visas of their non-European Union citizen ministers because the Government does not have a distinct religious workers' visa category. As part of new obligations under the Schengen Treaty and the Treaty of Amsterdam, all non-European Union citizens face a more restrictive visa and residence regime than they did in the past. By the end of the period covered by this report, no progress had been made on issuing visas for foreign clergy to perform their religious work in Greece.

The approximately 10,000 member Muslim community in Athens (composed primarily of economic migrants from Thrace, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq) is without its own mosque or any state-appointed cleric to officiate at various religious functions, including funerals. Members of the Muslim community often transport their deceased back to Thrace for religious burials. In June 2000, the Parliament approved a bill allowing construction of the first Islamic cultural center and mosque in the Athens area; however, construction had not started by the end of the period covered by this report. According to official sources, a total of 287 mosques operate freely in western Thrace and on the islands of Rhodes and Kos.

Differences remain within the Muslim community and between segments of the community and the Government over the means of selecting muftis. Under a 1991 law, the Government appointed two muftis and one assistant mufti, all residents in Thrace. The appointments to 10-year terms were based on the recommendations of a committee of Muslim notables selected by the Government. The Government argued that it must appoint the muftis, because in addition to religious duties, they perform judicial functions in many civil and domestic matters under Muslim religious law, for which the State pays them. In January 2001, the mufti from Komotini

was re-appointed for another 10-year term and in May 2001 the mufti from Xanthi also was re-appointed. Some Muslims accept the authority of the two government-appointed muftis; other Muslims, backed by Turkey, have "elected" two muftis to serve their communities (although there is no established procedure or practice for "election"). The Government has prosecuted "elected" muftis for usurping authority.

Controversy between the Muslim community and the Government also continued over the management and self-government of the "wakfs" (Muslim charitable organizations), particularly in regards to the appointment of officials as well as the degree and type of administrative control. A 1980 law placed the administration of the wakfs in the hands of the appointed muftis and their representatives. In response to objections from some Muslims that this arrangement weakened the financial autonomy of the wakfs and violated the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, a 1996 presidential decree put the wakfs under the administration of a committee for 3 years as an interim measure pending resolution of outstanding problems. The interim period was extended in 1999. At the end of the period covered by this report, the Government was preparing a draft bill that would permit Muslims to elect their own administrative committee for each municipality.

In the past, Muslim activists have complained that the Government regularly lodges tax liens against the wakfs, although they are tax-free foundations in theory. Under a national land and property registry law that came into full effect in January 1999, the wakfs, along with all property holders, must register all of their property with the Government. The law permits the Government to seize any property that the owners are not able to document; there are built-in reporting and appeals procedures. The wakfs were established in 1560; however, due to the destruction of files during the two world wars, the wakfs are unable to document ownership of much of their property. They have not registered the property, so they cannot pay assessed taxes. The Government had not sought to enforce either the assessments or the registration requirement by the end of the period covered by this report.

Evangelical parishes are located throughout the country. Members of missionary faiths report having difficulties with harassment and police detention due to anti-proselytizing laws. Church officials express concern that anti-proselytizing laws remain on the books, although such laws no longer hinder their ministering to the poor and to children.

During the period covered by this report, there were no further assertions that the municipality in Thessaloniki and in some villages refused to record the conversion of former Orthodox believers to other religions.

In the summer of 2000, the Government decided to remove the notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards. This decision sparked a national debate, which is still continuing, on the role of the Church in Greek society.

In January 1998, a law providing an alternative form of mandatory national service for conscientious objectors (for religious and ideological reasons) took effect. It provides that conscientious objectors may work in state hospitals or municipal services for 36 months, in lieu of mandatory military service. Conscientious objector groups generally characterized the legislation as a "positive first step" but criticized the 36-month alternative service term, which is double the regular 18-month period of military service. Since January 1998, all members of Jehovah's Witnesses (both clergy and laymen) who wished to submit applications for alternative nonmilitary service have been permitted to do so. There were 18 religiously based conscientious objector cases still pending resolution at the end of the reporting period. These cases pertain to individuals who were in the process of contesting a prison term for refusing to serve in the military and whose cases were not covered by the 1998 law.

A 1939 law prohibits the functioning of private schools in buildings owned by non-Orthodox religious foundations; however, this law is not enforced in practice.

Religious instruction in Orthodoxy in public, primary, and secondary schools is mandatory for all Greek Orthodox students. Non-Orthodox students are exempt from this requirement. However, members of Jehovah's Witnesses have reported some instances of discrimination related to attendance at religious education classes or other celebrations of religious or nationalistic character. Members of the Muslim community in Athens are lobbying for Islamic religious instruction for their children. The neighborhood schools offer no alternative supervision for the children during the period of religious instruction. The community has complained that this forces the parents to have their children attend Orthodox religious instruction by default.

In Thessaloniki in late 1999, the Government Tax Office refused to recognize the Jehovah Witnesses as a non-profit association (Evangelicals and Baha'is are considered non-profit associations) and imposed an inheritance tax for property willed to them. The groups appealed the decision in 2000; the Court of Appeals wrote off the imposed tax in April 2001.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Church leaders report that their permanent members (nonmissionaries) do not encounter discriminatory treatment. However, police occasionally detained Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses (on average once every 2 weeks) after receiving complaints that the individuals were engaged in proselytizing. In most cases, these individuals were held for several hours at a police station and then released with no charges filed. Many reported that they were not allowed to call their lawyers and that they were abused verbally by police officers for their religious beliefs. There were no proselytizing-related court cases during the period covered by this report.

Some Muslims accept the authority of the two Government-appointed muftis; other Muslims, backed by Turkey, have "elected" two muftis to serve their communities.

The Government has convicted one of the elected muftis 14 times in 5 years for usurping the authority of the official mufti. All of the respective sentences remained suspended pending appeal at the end of the period covered by this report. The other elected mufti, who was convicted in 1991 of usurping the authority of the official mufti, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights. In December 1999, the court ruled that the conviction violated his freedom of religion and self-expression, but it did not rule on the question of his legal status as mufti.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees apart from the problems of temporary police detention experienced by Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements in Freedom of Religion

Overall, leaders of minority religions noted a general improvement in government tolerance during the period covered by this report, citing fewer detentions for proselytizing, the conscientious objector law, and an effective, well-run Ombudsman's office, which successfully handled an increasing number of cases related to religious freedom.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity. Many attribute the preservation of Greek national identity to the actions of the Greek Orthodox Church during approximately 400 years of Ottoman rule and the subsequent nation building period. The Church wields significant social, political, and economic influence, and it owns a considerable, although undetermined, amount of property.

In the minds of many Greeks, an ethnic Greek is also an Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation.

Members of minority faiths have reported incidents of societal discrimination, such as local bishops warning parishioners not to visit clergy or members of minority faiths and neighbors, and requesting that the police arrest missionaries for proselytizing. However, with the exception of the Muslim minority of western Thrace, most members of minority faiths consider themselves satisfactorily integrated into society. Organized official interaction between religious communities is infrequent.

Some non-Orthodox religious communities believe that they have been unable to communicate with officials of the Orthodox Church and claim that the attitude of the Orthodox Church toward their faiths has increased social intolerance toward their religions. The Orthodox Church has issued a list of practices and religious groups, including members of Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical Protestants, Scientologists, Mormons, Baha'is, and others, which it believes to be sacrilegious. Officials of the Orthodox Church have acknowledged that they refuse to enter into dialog with religious groups considered harmful to Greek Orthodox worshippers; church leaders instruct Orthodox Greeks to shun members of these faiths.

In October 1999, a rededication of a synagogue in Hania, Crete as a house of prayer and a cultural center was marred by public criticism of the event by the regional governor. However, the Minister of National Education and Religion, and other government and Greek Orthodox officials, lent their support to the rededication. A new Jewish museum opened in Thessaloniki in early March 2001 and was officially inaugurated by the Jewish community in Thessaloniki and the Greek au-

thorities in May 2001. A temporary Anne Frank exhibition was displayed in Thessaloniki in April 2001.

Conservative Orthodox clerics protested Pope John Paul II's May 4 to 5, 2001, visit to the country; however, the Government distanced itself from these extremists, as did Archbishop Christodoulos and most members of the Greek Orthodox Church.

The Government's decision in 2000 to remove religious affiliation from national identity cards led to a national debate. The issue led Archbishop Christodoulos to organize religious protest rallies in Thessaloniki and Athens in June 2000. Both demonstrations drew over 100,000 supporters. Archbishop Christodoulos vociferously criticized the Government and launched a campaign to collect signatures to petition the Government to allow religious affiliation as an option on national identity cards. The Orthodox Church alleges that it has collected 3 million signatures. In March 2001, Archbishop Christodoulos blamed "the Jews" for the government's decision to remove notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards. The Government distanced itself from Christodoulos' statement.

In April 2001, vandals desecrated the Jewish Cemetery of Trikala.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officers meet regularly with working-level officials responsible for religious affairs in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education and Religious Affairs. The Ambassador and Political Counselor discussed religious freedom with senior government officials and religious leaders. The U.S. Embassy also regularly discusses religious freedom issues in contacts with other government officials, including mayors, regional leaders, and Members of Parliament. Officers from the Embassy and the Consulate General in Thessaloniki meet regularly with representatives of various religious groups, including the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic communities. In March 2001, in the first visit by a U.S. Ambassador to Thrace in 34 years, the Ambassador met with leaders of the Muslim and Christian communities. The U.S. Embassy investigates every complaint of religious discrimination brought to its attention.

Employees of the U.S. Embassy's consular section have helped Bible Baptist clergy get permission to visit all prisoners, not only those of the Baptist faith. The consular section also has actively followed issues relating to religious workers' visas and property taxes.

The U.S. Embassy and Consulate promote and support initiatives related to religious freedom. For example, Embassy staff has gathered leaders of the religious minority groups in Athens together for representational dinners. Participants noted the uniqueness and the value of such gatherings in Greece.

The Ambassador has been an open supporter of the Jewish Museum and the Jewish community in general. During an official visit to Rhodes, he visited the Jewish and Muslim communities. In April 2001, the Consul General and the Deputy Chief of Mission attended the opening of the Anne Frank exhibition displayed in Thessaloniki.

The Ambassador and embassy officials regularly visit religious sites throughout the country, invite representatives of all faiths to social events, and meet with individuals of all faiths.

HUNGARY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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. There is no state religion; however, the four "historic churches" and certain other denominations enjoy some privileges not available to other faiths.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 35,910 square miles, and the population is an estimated 10.1 million.

According to traditional estimates, 68 percent of believers are Catholic, 21 percent are members of the Reformed Church, 4 percent are members of the Lutheran Church, and less than 1 percent are followers of Judaism. These four are considered the country's historic churches. The remaining 7 percent are divided between all other denominations. Largest among these is the Congregation of Faith, a Hungarian evangelical Christian movement. Other denominations include a broad range of Christian groups, including five Orthodox denominations. In addition, there are seven Buddhist denominations, and two Islamic communities.

A 1996 law permits citizens to donate 1 percent of their income tax to the church of their choice and an additional 1 percent to the nonprofit agency of their choice. Statistics from the collection of tax revenue voluntarily directed for church use confirm the ranking of traditional estimates. The top ten churches for the year 2000 and the number of individuals who chose to donate 1 percent of their tax to that church are as follows: Catholic Church—333,383; Calvinist Church—107,387; Lutheran Church—30,534; Congregation of Faith—8,209; Jewish Community—5,791; Krishna Consciousness—5,505; Jehovah's Witnesses—5,459; Baptist Church—3,373; Tibetan Buddhist Community—2,080; and Unitarian Church—1,558.

Strict enforcement of data protection regulations impedes the collection of official statistics on popular participation in religious life. However, independent surveys in 1996 and 1997 indicated that the population is not particularly devout. Only 15 percent of those surveyed considered themselves to be religiously active and closely followed the tenets of their church. The majority, 55 percent, said they practiced religion in their own way or were nominally religious but not regularly active in their church. Approximately 30 percent said they were nonreligious.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The 1990 Law on the Freedom of Conscience regulates the activities and benefits enjoyed by religious communities and establishes the criteria by which they attain that legal designation. Currently religious groups must provide the signatures of 100 members and a brief statement of principles to a local court to become registered as a church. While any group is free to practice their faith, formal registration makes available to a religious group certain protections and privileges, and grants access to several forms of state funding. The courts have registered over 100 churches.

In April 2001, Parliament voted down a government amendment that sought to tighten the law governing religious groups. Along with several noncontroversial technical changes, the government's amendment included three contentious points that the opposition and a number of small churches found objectionable. The bill offered a definition of religion and a listing of religious activities that would be used to determine what groups could benefit from church status. It empowered the Prosecutor General's office to seek and gain access to records on the activities of churches. Finally, the amendment sought to codify the Parliament's ability to legally differentiate among churches based on their social and functional differences. The stated aim of these proposals was to attempt to prevent abuse of registration procedures by organizations seeking tax breaks and other benefits while masquerading as religious groups. Churches lacking an extended historical presence in the country worried that the proposal, although perhaps well intentioned, would provide opportunities for persecution or open a debate in Parliament that could lead to a more restrictive environment.

The Government budget for 1999 included subsidies for 59 denominations, and the 2000 budget provides subsidies for 76. The State grants financial support for religious practice, educational work, and the maintenance of public art collections of cultural value. The Government provides the same financial support for church education as for state institutions on a per child basis.

To promote the revitalization of religious institutions and settle property issues, the Government signed separate agreements with the country's four "historic churches" (the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches and the Jewish community), and with two smaller churches (Hungarian Baptist and Budai Serb Or-

thodox) between 1997 and 1999. In defense of the agreements Prime Minister Viktor Orban stated that “under the given circumstances, we succeeded in removing all financial, administrative, political, and legal hurdles from the path of our historic churches.” The churches and the State agreed on a number of properties to be returned, and an amount of monetary compensation to be paid for properties that could not be returned. These agreements are subsumed under the 1991 Compensation Law, which require the government to compensate churches for properties confiscated by the Government after January 1, 1946. In 1999 the Government paid churches \$21 million (5 billion Huf) as compensation for the assets confiscated during the Communist regime. By 2011 the State is expected to pay an estimated total of \$179 million (42 billion Huf) to the churches for buildings not returned. While these agreements dealt primarily with property issues and restitution, they also have provisions dealing with the public service activities of the churches, religious education, and the preservation of monuments.

There are more than 1,600 pending cases of real property that once belonged to churches that, between 1999 and 2011, the State must decide whether or not to return. Real estate cases have involved 12 religious groups: Catholic; Calvinist; Lutheran; Unitarian; Baptist; Hungarian Romanian Orthodox; Hungarian Orthodox; Budai Serb Orthodox; Hungarian Methodist; Seventh-Day Adventist; the Salvation Army, and the Confederation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ). Overall, 7,220 claims were made by churches for property restitution under the 1991 Compensation Law: 1,600 cases were rejected as inapplicable under the law; the Government decided to return the property in 1,129 cases, and gave cash payments in another 1,770 cases; approximately 1,000 cases were resolved directly between former and present owners without government intervention; and the remainder (approximately 1,660 cases) must be decided by 2011. Religious orders and schools have regained some property confiscated by the Communist regime.

In 1992 Parliament passed a compensation law that provides for restitution to families of persons who were sentenced in court under the Communist and Nazi regimes. The Constitutional Court in 1996 decreed that the law was drawn too narrowly. In 1997 Parliament passed modifications to this law and extended compensation for the period 1939 to 1989 to “victims of political autocracy.” This category includes victims of political, religious, and racist persecution during World War II, forced laborers in Soviet camps, and victims of the 1956 revolution. At that time, the Government decided upon \$12 million (3 billion Huf) as the total compensation figure to be distributed among all Holocaust victims. Based on this figure, the Orban Government in 1998 decided it could allow compensation of \$128 (30,000 Huf) to the heirs of the Holocaust victims. MAZSIHISZ and international Jewish organizations criticized the package as unfair, comparing it to previous awards of \$4,255 (1 million Huf) given to the heirs of victims executed by the Communist regime. In November 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the proposed package was inadequate. The Government is working on a new proposal. In 1998 the Ministry for Cultural Heritage initiated an inventory of museum holdings to identify works of art eligible for restitution or compensation for Holocaust victims.

The traditional practice of going to church and participating in a religious service before taking the oath of office is not compulsory, but it is practiced by some political figures, including Prime Minister Orban in 1998.

Easter Monday, Whit Monday, All Saints Day, and Christmas Day are all celebrated as national holidays. These holidays do not negatively impact any religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

However, the Government has demonstrated a willingness to treat the larger or longer established religions more favorably than the minority religious communities. An amendment to the tax code adopted in December 2000 makes donations to the country’s large or long-established churches tax deductible. For donors to qualify for the deduction, a church must be able to document one of the following; that it has been present in the country for 100 years or more; that it has been legally registered for at least 30 years (as no new churches were registered under the Communist regime, this essentially means churches registered before 1925); or that the present church following equals 1 percent of all tax contributors (approximately 43,000 persons). These criteria limit the tax benefit to only 14 of the some 90 registered churches in the country. Several of the smaller churches whose members cannot participate in this tax deduction took the case to the Constitutional Court, which chose not to review it.

In 2000 investigations into the activities of the Congregation of Faith by the Hungarian Taxation Authority (APEH) resulted in no charges. The Congregation also was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry in 1999 when the ties between the Church and one of the former ruling parties, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), came under scrutiny. The congregation, which has been in existence for 20 years, is the fastest growing religious group in the country. It is a charismatic evangelical Christian church and its religious discipline, zeal, and appeal to youth have engendered distrust among the country's older, more traditional population.

The APEH has also initiated investigations of the Church of Scientology in 2000 based on questions regarding the registration of clergy. The investigations took place at the Church's office where APEH investigators requested files and conducted interviews. The investigations have not affected the usual management of the Church and have not required the expenditure of large amounts of Church funds. The APEH has stated that it will complete the investigation by September 2001.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between religious groups are amicable and there is little friction between churches. Several Christian churches and the Jewish community have institutionalized a Christian-Jewish dialog, bringing together religious academics for regular discussions. Across a wide range of other areas, churches have also shown a great willingness to work together to achieve common social or political goals.

Overall, society welcomed the boom in religious activity that followed the transition from communism. More recently, however, there is some concern over the ease with which regulations on religion may be exploited, as well as concerns about the perceived undue influence that some "new churches" have over their followers. Government leaders say these sentiments support their efforts to modify the Law on Freedom of Conscience.

The 1997 changes to the Penal Code made it easier to enforce and stiffen penalties for hate crimes committed on the basis of the victim's ethnicity, race, or nationality. Ehrem Kemal, a skinhead group leader, was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment for inflammatory anti-Semitic speeches made in 1997. The sentence was suspended and replaced in 2000 with 4 years probation.

There continue to be occasional reports of vandalism and/or destruction of Christian and Jewish property. National Police figures for the first 4 months of 2001 indicate a declining trend. While in 2000 33 religious buildings and 343 cemeteries were vandalized, in the first 4 months of 2001 only 7 religious buildings and 76 cemeteries were attacked. Most police and religious authorities consider these acts of youth vandalism and not indications of religious intolerance.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy actively monitors religious activities, maintaining regular contact with government officials, members of parliament, leaders of large and small churches, and representatives of local and international nongovernmental organizations that deal with issues of religious freedom. Through these contacts, embassy officers have tracked closely recent government efforts to modify the country's laws and the impact this might have on smaller, less well-established churches.

The Embassy has also remained active on issues of compensation and property restitution for Holocaust victims. Embassy officers have worked with MAZSIHISZ, the Hungarian Jewish Public Foundation, other local and international Jewish organizations and with members of the Parliament, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage to maintain a dialog on restitution issues, promote fair compensation, and secure access to Holocaust-era archives.

ICELAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the State financially supports and promotes an official religion, Lutheranism.

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 Lutheran Church, which is the state religion, enjoys some advantages not available to other faiths in the country.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Iceland has a land area of 40,000 square miles and a population of 282,845. This gives Iceland an average of just 7 inhabitants per square mile. However, because the interior of the country is largely uninhabitable, most people live on or near the coasts. The area surrounding the capital, Reykjavik, alone has more than 160,000 residents, or about 60 percent of the country's total population.

Of the total population, 248,411 are members of the state Lutheran Church (88 percent), according to the National Statistical Bureau. Some 1,115 individuals resigned from the Church during the past year, far exceeding the 184 new registrants. Many of those who resigned from the state Church joined one of the three Lutheran Free Churches, which now have a total membership of 11,098 (4 percent). The breakdown in membership is as follows: Reykjavik Free Church 5,345; Hafnarfjordur Free Church 3,485; and Reykjavik Independent Church 2,268. Some 10,661 individuals (4 percent) are members of 20 other recognized and registered religious organizations: Roman Catholic Church 4,307; Pentecostal Church 1,494; The Way, Free Church 733; Seventh Day Adventists 723; Jehovah's Witnesses 644; Asa Faith Society 512; The Cross 461; Buddhist Association of Iceland 432; Baha'i Community 386; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 191; The Icelandic Christchurch 176; Muslim Association 164; Betania 114; The Rock, Christian Community 72; The Church of Evangelism 65; Kefas, Christian Community 63; Sjonarhaed Congregation 51; Zen in Iceland, Night Pasture 34; The Believers' Fellowship 33; and First Baptist Church 6. Betania was the only new religious organization officially recognized and registered during the past year. Finally, there were 6,325 individuals (2 percent) who belonged to unregistered or unspecified religious organizations and 6,350 (2 percent) who were not part of any religious organization. There are also religions, such as Judaism, which have been practiced in the country for years, but have never requested official recognition. In official statistics these religions are listed as "other and non-specified."

A large proportion of citizens who belong to the state Lutheran Church do not practice their faith actively. However, the majority of citizens use traditional Lutheran rituals to mark events such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. Of Christians who practice their faith actively, the majority are members of Christian churches or organizations other than the state Lutheran Church. Finally, growing numbers of Icelanders are choosing to mark important anniversaries and events with nonreligious ceremonies rather than traditional Lutheran rituals. For example, in the spring of 2001, 73 teenagers chose to be "confirmed" in a ceremony carried out by the secular organization "Ethical Education."

According to statistics provided by the immigration authorities, the number of foreigners receiving a residence permit has increased significantly during the past several years. In direct relation to the increased number of foreigners (itinerant workers, immigrants, and refugees), the number of religious organizations has increased, since such foreigners often practice faiths different than those of citizens born in the country.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The official state religion is Lutheranism.

The salaries of the 146 ministers in the state church are paid directly by the State, and these ministers are considered to be public servants under the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs. The State operates a network of Lutheran parish churches throughout the country. In new housing areas, land is automatically set aside for the construction of a parish church to serve the area. Except for those who specifically opt out, all citizens 16 years of age and above must pay a church

tax of approximately \$6 (Icelandic kronur 554.24) per month, which goes to support the operation of the state church. Individuals who choose to opt out of the state church may direct their monthly payments to another religious denomination or organization, provided that denomination or organization has been recognized and registered as such by the State. In cases where the individual has not indicated a religious affiliation, or belongs to an organization that is not recognized officially and registered by the State, the church fee is directed to a secular institution—the University of Iceland.

A law passed by Parliament in December 1999 (Law Number 108) sets specific conditions and procedures that religious organizations must follow in order to be recognized officially and registered by the State. Such recognition is necessary in order for religious organizations other than the state church to receive a per capita share of church tax funds. The 1999 law is narrower in scope than the 1975 law it replaced and applies only to religious organizations that are seeking to be, or are already, officially recognized and registered. No restrictions or requirements are placed on unregistered religious organizations, which have the same rights as other groups in society. The law was considered necessary to deal with frequent attempts by individuals to obtain recognition of religious organizations simply to receive the tax income benefits. The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs handles applications for recognition and registration of religious organizations. The 1999 law provides for a three-member panel consisting of a theologian, a lawyer, and a social scientist from the University of Iceland to determine the bona fides of the applications. In order to be recognized officially and registered, a religious organization must, among other things, be well established within the country and have a core group of members who regularly practice the religion in compliance with its teachings. All registered religious organizations are required to submit an annual report to the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs describing the organization's operations over the past year. The new law also specifies that the leader of a religious organization must be at least 25 years of age and pay taxes in Iceland. However, the previous requirement that the leader had to be Icelandic was eliminated.

Law Number 108 confirms that parents control the religious affiliation of their children until the children reach the age of 16. However, parents are required by the law, in accordance with the Children's Act, to "consult" their children about any changes in the children's affiliation after the age of 12. In the absence of specific instructions to the contrary, children at birth are assumed to have the same religious affiliation as their mother and are registered as such.

The Government is passive rather than proactive in promoting interfaith understanding. The Government does not sponsor programs or official church-government councils to coordinate interfaith dialog. However, one of the ministers in the state Church, who is of Japanese origin, has been designated to serve the immigrant community and help recent arrivals integrate into Icelandic society.

Under Law Number 66, which regulates public elementary schools ("grunnskolar"), the Government requires instruction in religion and ethics based on Christianity during the entire period of compulsory education; that is, ages 6 through 16. In a debate over whether the instruction should be "Christian" or "religious," the traditionalist view prevailed. Virtually all schools are public schools, with a few exceptions such as the only Roman Catholic parochial school, which is located in Reykjavik where the vast majority of the country's small Roman Catholic community resides. All schools are subject to Law Number 66 with respect to the compulsory curriculum. However, the precise content of this instruction can vary; religious instruction at the Catholic school follows Catholic rather than Lutheran teachings.

Students can be exempted from Christianity classes. According to Law Number 66, the Minister of Education has the formal authority to exempt pupils from instruction in compulsory subjects such as Christianity. In practice, individual school authorities issue exemptions informally. There is no obligation for school authorities to offer other religious or secular instruction in place of Christianity classes.

Educational material on different religions is part of the compulsory syllabus. In addition, since religion is a component of culture, pupils learn about religions other than Christianity in history and social science classes as well. The curriculum is not rigid and teachers often are given wide latitude in the classroom. Some place greater emphasis on ethical and philosophical issues rather than on religious instruction per se.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by the report.

There are no religious detainees or prisoners.

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 ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. If members of religious minorities face discrimination, it is more indirect in nature, taking the form of prejudice and lack of interfaith or intercultural understanding. Iceland has a small, close-knit, homogenous society that closely guards its culture and is not accustomed to accommodating outsiders. Even though most citizens are not active members of the state church, it is still an important part of the country's cultural identity.

During the last decade there has been increased awareness of other religious groups. Informal interfaith meetings have occurred. Two local human rights organizations were established recently. Diversity Enriches was established on December 10, 1998. Its board members include government officials, journalists and academics; it aims at assisting "new residents" of the country. The Human Rights Association of Immigrants and their Families was founded on June 12, 1999. These organizations are a reflection of the increased attention being given to the status of new immigrants and their religious beliefs.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy also maintains a regular dialog on religious freedom issues with the leaders of various religious groups and nongovernmental organizations.

IRELAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 27,136 square miles and its population was approximately 3.6 million in 1996.

The country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. According to official government statistics collected during the 1991 census (the most recent figures available), the religious affiliation of the population is 91.6 percent Roman Catholic, 2.5 percent Church of Ireland (Anglican), 0.4 percent Presbyterian, 0.1 percent Methodist, and less than 0.1 percent Jewish. Approximately 3 percent of the population are members of other religions or have no specific religious belief. (The 2001 census, which was due to have taken place in April 2001, was rescheduled for April 2002, due to the foot and mouth disease crisis.) Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities are growing, especially in Dublin, as a result of immigration.

Immigrants and noncitizens encounter few difficulties in practicing their faiths. There are some difficulties for non-Catholics associated with the availability of facilities and personnel outside of Dublin.

Although almost 92 percent of the population are classified as Roman Catholic, this is a "nominal" figure. According to the Catholic Information Office, just over half of Irish Catholics are estimated to be active church members. There are also numerous and varied small religious groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Constitution prohibits promotion of one religion over another and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, and the Government does not restrict the teaching or practice of any faith. There is no state religion, and there is no discrimination against nontraditional religious groups. There is no legal requirement that religious groups or organizations register with the Government, nor is there any formal mechanism for government recognition of a religion or religious group.

While Roman Catholicism is the clearly dominant religion, it is not favored officially or in practice. However, adherence to Roman Catholicism may be politically advantageous because of the country's history and tradition as a predominantly Catholic country and society. Members of the major political parties (Fianna Fail and Fine Gael) tend to be practicing Catholics.

The following religious holidays are considered national holidays: St. Patrick's Day (the country's national day), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Christmas Day, and St. Stephen's Day. These holidays do not negatively impact any religious groups.

The Government does not require but does permit religious instruction in public schools. Most primary and secondary schools are denominational, and their boards of management are controlled partially by the Catholic Church. Under the terms of the Constitution, the Department of Education must and does provide equal funding to schools of different religious denominations (such as an Islamic school in Dublin). Although religious instruction is an integral part of the curriculum, parents may exempt their children from such instruction.

The Employment Equality Act prohibits discrimination in relation to employment on the basis of nine discriminatory grounds, including religion. An Equality Authority assures continued progress toward the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality in employment. In April 2000, the President signed into law the Equal Status 2000 Act, which prohibits discrimination outside of the employment context (such as in education or provision of goods) based on the same grounds used in the Employment Equality Act. The Equal Status 2000 Act was implemented in December 2000.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between various religious communities are amicable and friction is rare. Various religions, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), and academic institutions have established activities or projects designed to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different religions.

Society largely is homogenous; as a result, religious differences are not tied to ethnic or political differences. However, some citizens have political attitudes toward the conflict in Northern Ireland that are driven by their religious identities and loyalties. For example, some Catholics support Nationalist and Republican parties or ideals in the north on the basis of their religious loyalty.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with all communities, including religious groups and NGO's that deal with issues of religious freedom on a regular basis.

ITALY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Problems relating to religion that arise stem from formal state recognition (to facilitate access by ministers of religion to public hospitals and prisons, or to link religious ceremonies to civil registration of marriages), state financial support for religion, and state involvement with the teaching of religion in the public schools. The Catholic Church's historic and continuing predominant role in society leads to controversy when Church teaching is perceived as instruction to Catholic legislators on matters of public policy.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 116,347 square miles and its population is approximately 57.8 million. An estimated 85 percent of native-born citizens are nominally Roman Catholics. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses form the second largest denomination among such citizens, numbering some 400,000 adherents. However, immigration—both legal and illegal—continues to add large groups of non-Christian residents, mainly Muslims from North Africa, South Asia, Albania, and the Middle East, who now number an estimated 1 million. Buddhists include approximately 40,000 Europeans and 20,000 Asians. Scientologists claim approximately 100,000 members, Waldensians approximately 30,000 members, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) approximately 20,000 members. A shrinking Jewish community of approximately 30,000 persons maintains synagogues in 21 cities. Other significant religious communities include Orthodox churches and small Protestant groups, Japanese Buddhists, and South Asian Hindus.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1947 Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Prior to the Constitution's adoption, the country's relations with the Catholic Church were governed by a 1929 Concordat, which established Catholicism as the country's state religion. A 1984 revision of the Concordat formalized the principle of a secular state but maintained the principle of state support for religion—support that also could be extended, if requested, to non-Catholic confessions. In such cases, state support is to be governed by legislation implementing the provisions of an accord ("intesa") entered into by the Government and the religious confession. If a religious community so requests, an intesa can provide for state routing, via voluntary check-off on taxpayer returns, of funds to that community—a privilege that some communities initially declined but later requested. An intesa grants ministers of religion automatic access to state hospitals, prisons, and military barracks, allows for civil registry of religious marriages, facilitates special religious practices regarding funerals, and exempts students from school attendance on religious holidays.

In 1984 the first such accord granted specific benefits to the Waldensian Church. Similar accords (which require lengthy procedures to obtain) extended similar benefits to the Adventists and Assembly of God (1988), to Jews (1989), and to Baptists and Lutherans (1995). In March 2000, the Government signed accords with the Buddhist Union and Jehovah's Witnesses. However, the parliamentary committee to which these accords were referred failed to approve implementing legislation, and questions raised in committee suggested hostility on the part of some of its members toward Jehovah's Witnesses.

Other groups that have filed for an intesa include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Apostolic Church, Orthodox Church (of the Constantinople Patriarchate), Hindus, and (Japanese Buddhist) Sogagakai. At least two organizations in the country's growing Muslim community also have announced their intention to seek an intesa.

The revised Concordat of 1984 accorded the Catholic Church certain privileges. For example, the Church is allowed to select Catholic teachers to provide instruction in “hour of religion” courses taught in the public schools. The teachers are paid by the State. This class is optional, and students not interested in it are free to study other subjects or, in certain cases, to leave school early. While in the past this instruction involved Catholic priests teaching Catechism, Church-selected instructors now may be either lay or religious, and their instruction is intended to include material relevant to non-Catholic faiths. Problems may arise in small communities where information about other faiths and numbers of non-Catholic communicants is limited.

While Roman Catholicism is no longer the state religion, its role as the dominant one occasionally gives rise to problems—some overt, others subtly societal. Declining enrollment in Catholic schools led Church officials to seek government aid, despite the Constitution’s prohibition against state support for private schools. A 1999 legislative formula that provided means-tested support for students from poorer families (enrolled either at private or state schools) nonetheless drew papal criticism for being “inadequate.” Following a March 2000 European Parliament vote in favor of granting homosexual couples the same legal rights as married ones, the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Family called on legislators “and particularly Catholic members of Parliament” to oppose such legislation. The continuing presence of Catholic symbols, such as crucifixes, which may be found hanging on courtroom or government office walls, has drawn criticism and has been the object of lawsuits. In April 2000, the Court of Cassation ruled in favor of a schoolteacher who asserted that crucifixes should not be present at voting sites maintained by a secular state. Subsequent to a series of Church consultations with political leaders prior to May 2001 elections, President Carlo Ciampi underlined the secular nature of the State and the Constitution’s explicit separation of church and state.

Missionaries or religious workers do not encounter problems but must apply for appropriate visas prior to arriving in the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Religious and government officials encourage mutual respect for religious differences.

In view of the negative aspects of the nation’s Fascist past, government leaders routinely acknowledge and pay tribute to Jews victimized by the country’s 1938 racial laws. For example, in January 1999, then-President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, ministers, and top parliamentary officials attended a presentation in the Chamber of Deputies of a book on the background to, and consequences of, those racial laws.

Increasing immigration, much of it from China, South Asia, North and West Africa, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Turkey, and the Middle East, is altering demographic and cultural patterns in communities across the country and has led to some anti-immigrant sentiment. As many migrants are Muslim, religion becomes an additional factor differentiating them from native-born citizens. Some Catholic prelates have contributed to popular reaction by emphasizing the perceived threat posed by the immigrants to the country’s “national identity” and what they view as the country’s need to favor immigration by Catholics “or at least Christians.” On occasion Church spokesmen have emphasized the difficulties in Catholic-Muslim mixed marriages.

For example, on June 7, 2000, the press reported that Italian Episcopal Conference Secretary, Monsignor Ennio Antonelli, commented on the Conference’s decision earlier that year to tighten dispensation for Catholics to marry Muslims. He said that “the problem of mixed marriages is also tied-in with the matter of a possible accord between the Italian State and Muslims. The Italian State should assure, in a rigorous manner, that Italian constitutional values are protected, especially in regard to the family.” The report further noted that the Conference’s current position represented a reversal of previous Church policy, as 3 years earlier

Church officials had responded to the growing trend of Catholic-Muslim marriages by organizing classes on Muslim world culture and tradition.

In September 2000, Bologna Cardinal Giacomo Biffi issued a pastoral letter, in which he called for an immigration policy favoring Catholics over those who are Muslim “in order to safeguard our nation’s identity.” Biffi’s letter provoked protests but also drew support. One prominent priest, Gianni Bagget Bozzo, who often writes for press publication, affirmed “the need to erect a Christian dike against the Muslim invasion of Italy.”

In October 2000, Interior Minister Enzo Bianco revealed a letter he had received from Cardinal Biffi, in which the prelate repeated his warning that Europe must either return to Christianity or risk becoming Muslim. The Cardinal maintained that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with historically Christian countries.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

KAZAKHSTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the various religious communities worship largely without government interference; however, the Government’s concerns about regional security threats from alleged religious extremists led it to encourage local officials to limit the practice of religion by some nontraditional groups.

Respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the period covered by this report. While Kazakhstan’s tradition of religious tolerance and interfaith harmony remained strong, President Nursultan Nazarbayev called on local officials to increase monitoring of religious organizations, closing some if necessary. Two courts in Kyzyl-Orda Oblast ordered a group of Jehovah’s Witnesses to suspend religious activities until the group is registered, and local prosecutors in Atyrau Oblast issued a similar order against a Baptist group. Neither group had the 10 adult sponsors required for registration. Local government officials increasingly harass Islamic and Christian groups whose members are regarded as “nontraditional” or extremist. In April 2001, a court in Aktau fined three foreigners for allegedly carrying out “missionary” activities in violation of their visa status, and expelled them from the country. There were credible reports from around the country that local law enforcement officials regularly visited religious organizations for inspections.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials lobbied intensively against provisions in draft amendments that the Government proposed to the religion law that would have fallen short of international standards for religious freedom. Embassy officials interceded with national and local authorities in the case of the foreigners expelled from Aktau. The Embassy sponsored the visit of a U.S. scholar of Islam who conducted programs on the role of Islam in a secular society.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 1,052,540 square miles, and its population, as of the September 2000 census, was 14,859,8000.

The society is ethnically diverse, and many religions are represented. However, due to the country’s nomadic and Soviet past many residents reject religious labels or describe themselves as nonbelievers. Ethnic Kazakhs, who constitute approximately one half of the national population, historically are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School. In a 1998 government survey, 80 percent of them described themselves as Muslims, although government and independent experts believe that a large number of these are nonobservant. Other traditionally Sunni Muslim groups, constituting approximately 5 to 10 percent of the population, include Tatars, Uyghurs, Uzbeks, Turks, and Chechens. Slavs, principally Russians and Ukrainians, are by tradition Eastern Orthodox and constitute about one-third of the population. The 1998 government survey found that 60 percent of ethnic Slavs identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. An independent expert estimates that two-thirds of Slavic citizens would say that they belong to no religion or are indifferent

to religion. Ethnic Germans, largely Lutheran and Catholic, constituted approximately 5 percent of the population when the country became independent in 1991, but the majority of these are thought to have emigrated to Germany. A small Jewish community is estimated at well below 1 percent of the population. Seven new synagogues were open or under construction as of the end of the period covered by this report.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the various religious communities worship largely without government interference; however, the Government's concerns about regional security threats from alleged religious extremists led it to encourage local officials to limit the practice of religion by some nontraditional groups. The Constitution defines the country as a secular state.

The National Religion Law, in contrast to laws governing other public associations, does not require religious organizations to register. It states that all persons are free to practice their religion "alone or together with others." As this clause makes no reference to registration, legal experts interpret it to ensure the right of members of unregistered groups to practice their religion. However, it does specify that those religious organizations that wish to receive legal status must register. Religious organizations must have legal status in order to buy or rent real property, hire employees, obtain visas for foreign missionaries, or engage in any other legal transactions. However, the more liberal provisions of the National Religion Law appear to have been undermined by a new Administrative Code, which entered into force in February 2001 and that allows the national and local authorities to suspend the activities or fine the leaders of unregistered religious organizations.

In practice many local officials insist that religious organizations register. Under the law, registration requires an application submitted by at least 10 persons. It is usually a quick and simple process; however, Korean groups continued to face problems obtaining registration. At the end of the period covered by this report, four protestant churches in different cities were experiencing delays of up to 8 months in obtaining approval of their registration applications.

Religious organizations receive no tax privileges other than exemptions from taxes on church collections and income from certain religious activities. The Government has donated buildings and provided other assistance for the construction of new mosques and Eastern Orthodox churches.

No religious holidays are state holidays.

Joint appearances by the Islamic Mufti and the Orthodox Archbishop, often in the presence of the President, were intended to promote religious and ethnic harmony. In the past, some members of other faiths, including Muslims not affiliated with the national Muslim organization headed by the Mufti, have criticized the Government's inclusion of the Mufti and the Archbishop in state events as official favoritism and a violation of the Constitutional separation of church and state.

In April 2001, as part of its campaign to prevent the development of religious extremism, the Government sent to Parliament a draft series of amendments to the National Religion Law that would have placed significant restrictions on religious freedom. It included provisions that would have banned "extremist religious associations;" increased from 10 to 50 the number of members required to file for registration of a religious organization; limited the right of registration for Muslim groups to those "recommended" by the Mufti's organization; forbidden missionary activities, including charity activities conducted by citizens if these activities are not formally declared to local authorities in advance; prohibited giving children a religious education or bringing them into religious groups against their will; and authorized local officials to suspend the activities of religious groups that conducted a religious activity outside of the place where they are registered. On June 27, 2001, the Government withdrew the draft amendments in order to thoroughly review the recommendations and comments of non-governmental and international organizations.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In two cases local courts used a provision in the new Administrative Code that requires religious organizations to register, to suspend the activities of at least two religious organizations in two different cities. There had been no previous reports of such actions. The previous Administrative Code prescribed fines for unregistered religious organizations but not suspension of their activities. It rarely, if ever, was employed against unregistered groups.

On March 14, 2001, a city court in Kyzl-Orda suspended the activities of a local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses because the group was not registered. A Kyzl-

Orda Oblast court upheld the suspension on April 9, 2001. The group had not registered because it did not have the required 10 adult members to file for registration. However, the national organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as many of its local associations, are registered.

On May 2, 2001, a local prosecutor in Kulsary (Atyrau Oblast) ordered the Iman (Love) Kazakhstani Baptist Church to stop meeting until it was registered. The church appealed; however, on May 6, 2001, an Atyrau regional prosecutor upheld the order. Church representatives claimed that they did not have the minimum of 10 adult members willing and eligible to sponsor the registration application. According to a press report the unregistered New Life Pentecostal Church in Kulsary, led by Pastor Taraz Somalyak, was also forbidden during the first half of 2001 from having further meetings until it registered.

On May 29, 2001, a city court in Taraz rejected an appeal by the city prosecutor to revoke the registration and suspend the activities of one of the Taraz Jehovah's Witnesses congregations. The prosecutor's appeal asserted that Jehovah's Witnesses had violated the Constitution by such actions as calling on members to refuse to perform military service or honor national symbols.

Religious rights advocates alleged that the Government had issued informal instructions to local authorities in September 2000, before the entry into effect of the new provisions of the Administrative Code in February 2001, not to register religious associations until a revised National Religion Law was in place. The Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan reported that at least three Protestant groups that applied for registration in October 2000 had received no response to their applications by June 2001. However, at least one foreign religious group received national registration after September 2000.

Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses cited continuing instances of harassment by a number of local governments. They claimed that city officials in Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kostanay, Karaganda, and Aktubinsk sometimes blocked their adherents from renting stadiums or other large public or private sites for religious meetings.

According to reports from the Keston News Service, a Krishna community living on a farm in Karasai region was harassed on several occasions by police. Keston alleges that this was a consequence of a September 2000 memorandum to local officials by the akim of Almaty region requesting more information about religious groups and reminding officials their responsibility to take measures against those violating procedures relating to religious activities. However, one Krishna leader reported that in most oblasts, officials leave their followers alone.

The Government frequently identifies the prevention of religious extremism as a top priority. Government officials point especially to the risk of political Islam spreading north from Afghanistan and other states. Their longstanding concerns intensified following a series of bombings in the capital of neighboring Uzbekistan in February 1999 and incursions by armed militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan from Tajikistan into neighboring Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000. The National Security Council, chaired by the President, created a commission in 1999 to develop policies to combat religious extremism. No information had been released, as of the end of the period covered by this report, describing its activities.

President Nazarbayev expressed the government's mood of greater wariness of religion in remarks he made on January 30, 2001, to an assembly of regional and local executive authorities known as akims. "What else are akims for? Is it really difficult for you to use your powers to monitor the legality of the activities of (religious groups)—closing them, if necessary? . . . It has become fashionable to build mosques, churches and prayer houses willy-nilly on land set aside by akims, but nobody is asking whether the mosques and churches are needed."

In April 2001, as part of its campaign to prevent the development of religious extremism, the Government sent to Parliament a draft series of amendments to the National Religion Law that would have placed restrictions on religious freedom. In meetings with foreign representatives about the draft amendments, government officials placed special emphasis on a provision giving the Kazakhstan Muslim Spiritual Administration (DUMKA) authority over the registration of Muslim groups. Although officials maintained that they expected the DUMKA, which is headed by the Mufti, to use this authority judiciously, the Mufti stated in a February 26, 2001, speech that only the "traditional religions," which existed in the republic from "time immemorial," should be left and the others should be banned. He claimed that the fear of Western reactions constrained such an approach. The Government withdrew the draft amendments on June 27, 2001.

Foreign missionary activity is authorized under law, but only when missionaries are accredited by the State. In practice many missionaries operate without accreditation. The Constitution requires foreign religious associations to carry out their ac-

tivities, including the appointment of the heads of religious associations, “in coordination with appropriate state institutions.” Foreign missionaries legally are entitled to register religious organizations; however, they generally find that they must list a majority of local citizens among the 10 founders of the religious organization. Other foreign missionaries, unwelcome to some Muslim and Orthodox citizens, have complained of occasional harassment by low-level government officials. In particular, evangelical Protestants working in schools, hospitals, and other social service institutions have alleged government hostility toward their efforts to proselytize. (These individuals often do not register as missionaries, as required by Kazakhstani law.)

A 1999 law on education prohibits educational institutions that have not been registered by the Ministry of Education. The law on education has no provision for licensing of religious schools. Religious rights activists reported that local law enforcement officials inspected religious schools and asked for licenses, but took no further actions against unregistered religious schools in most cases. In December 2000, the Almaty protestant seminary was closed by the district prosecutor’s office for operating without a license. The seminary presented a letter from the Ministry of Education stating that there was no requirement for the licensing of religious schools; however, this information did not change the decision of the district prosecutor’s office. First Deputy Minister of Education Yerlan Aryn sent a letter to all regional education departments on December 19, 2000, rescinding an earlier ban on visits to schools by religious figures, humanitarian and other aid from religious organizations, and the rental of facilities to religious groups.

In accordance with a Ministry of Justice request, the Jehovah’s Witnesses Church of Kazakhstan amended its charter to eliminate education as a religious activity.

In September 2000, an Ministry official announced that the Foreign Ministry would “recall” all Kazakhstani students studying in religious institutions outside the country, a step considered by some observers aimed primarily at preventing young Muslims from being radicalized by militant Islamic education abroad. The official said that the measure was intended to protect the country against religious extremism. It was unclear how the Government would implement the policy; however, in Fall 2000, the Government announced that several students studying in Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey would return voluntarily.

There were credible allegations that the Government played a significant role in the appointment in June 2000 of the new Mufti, the head of the national Muslim organization. The Mufti denied these allegations. In general the Government does not interfere with the appointment of religious leaders or the activities of foreign religious associations, some of which have succeeded in gaining thousands of adherents since independence.

Many media outlets, including some of the most widely distributed, have presented as objective news allegations that nontraditional religious groups present a threat to national security and social cohesion. Articles on Jehovah’s Witnesses and Baha’i faiths were particularly confrontational in the last months of the period covered by this report.

Law enforcement authorities conducted inspections of religious groups throughout the country in order, they asserted, to prevent the development of religious extremism and to ensure that religious groups pay taxes. These inspections also provided the authorities with information about the registration status of the religious groups being inspected, which in some cases led to suspensions pending the registration of the groups concerned.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In keeping with the provision in the new Administrative Code that forbids activities by unregistered religious organizations, on March 14, 2001, the city court in Kyzl-Orda fined two leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Kyzl-Orda, Gulzhakhan Zharikova and Bakhyt Altayev, about \$53 (7,750 tenge) each. The Court suspended the religious activities of local members of Jehovah’s Witnesses until the group registered at the local level. A Kyzl-Orda Oblast court upheld the suspension and fines on April 9, 2001. Zharikova and Altayev were not present at the appellate hearing; they claimed that they did not receive notification that the original date for the hearing had been changed. The leader of an unregistered Baptist church in Kyzl-Orda was fined \$53 (7,750 tenge) on April 10, 2001, and ordered to suspend operations until his church was registered.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, law enforcement action against their Kyzl-Orda community began on October 1, 2000, when a group of officials from the Committee for National Security (KNB, the national intelligence agency), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Oblast prosecutor’s office raided a Bible study meeting in Zharikova’s apartment. The officials reportedly had no warrant. A television crew

filmed the raid, which subsequently was shown in a report critical of Jehovah's Witnesses. The officials reportedly confiscated more than 200 religious publications and videotapes and brought several church members to a police station for questioning. The Oblast prosecutor had issued an order on October 31, 2000, requiring the group to register.

According to an unconfirmed press report, Kulsary prosecutor Hagibula Kasymov threatened to jail leaders of the Iman Kazakhstani Baptist Church, Kurmangazy Abdumuratov, and Askhat Alimkhanov, if their church continued to meet without registering.

On April 9, 2001, three foreign teachers of English were charged under Administrative Code sections that regulate the hiring of foreign workers and proscribe violations by foreigners of their stated purpose in country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs alleged that the teachers, "under the guise of educational activity," had been distributing religious materials, assisting religious groups, and "illegally participating in religious rites." The three tried to depart the country voluntarily on April 10, 2001, but were prevented from departing by airport border police because of the pending charges against them. They said that they were not notified of formal charges against them before they tried to depart. On April 16, 2001, a court in Aktau found them guilty of conducting "missionary" activities in violation of their visa status and fined them \$230 (33,000 tenge) and ordered them expelled from the country. The teachers were expelled on April 24, 2001.

On August 11, 2000, local authorities in Kustenay broke up a stadium convention of Jehovah's Witnesses, according to the Church. On August 14, a court fined convention organizers for holding an unsanctioned event. Their request for a permit to hold the convention had been denied. The Church alleged that authorities halted a similar gathering in Aktobe on October 22, 2000, after which two church leaders were detained for several hours. Church representatives claimed that Aktobe authorities had declined for 2 years to give them permission for a large gathering.

On occasion the authorities took action against groups engaged in proselytizing. In July 2000, in Akshoki, near the Chinese border, members of a Baptist church reported that local KNB officers, police, and clergy incited a crowd to threaten a group preaching Christianity and to burn Christian literature. One member was severely beaten by a group of eight men who demanded that he convert to Islam. Government officials declined to comment on this incident. On December 15, 2000, two Krishna Consciousness devotees were detained in Aktobe for selling Krishna books on the street. Police confiscated 20 books, but later released the women without charges. However, one Krishna leader reported that officials in most oblasts leave their followers alone. Also in December 2000, two members of Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested and detained for 1 day for proselytizing in Talgar. The police confiscated their documents, which they returned to them after 3 days. No charges were filed.

During the period covered by this report, the authorities took no action against police who allegedly beat 70 members of an Islamic group from Taraz who were detained temporarily in 1999.

Other than the brief detentions of members of Jehovah's Witnesses and Krishna Consciousness adherents in Aktobe and of members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Talgar, there were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country is multiethnic, with a long tradition of tolerance and secularism. Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. Since independence the number of mosques and churches has increased greatly.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Embassy, as well as senior State Department officials, lobbied intensively against the draft amendments to the National Religion Law. In approximately 10 separate meetings beginning in November 2000, the Ambassador expressed U.S. Government reservations about the amendments to the Minister of Culture, Information, and Public Accord (who chaired the Government's Interagency Committee on Religion), the Foreign Minister, President Nazarbayev's

national security and legal advisers, and groups of Parliamentarians. The Embassy coordinated closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Center in Almaty in arranging for an expert evaluation of the amendments. The evaluation documented the ways in which the draft amendments fell short of the country's international obligations on religious freedom. The Embassy's Charge d'Affaires and human rights officer joined two OSCE delegations that presented the evaluation to officials. The human rights officer also met frequently with human rights activists and representatives of many churches concerned with the draft amendments. Embassy Officials also shared information with the United Kingdom-based Keston Institute, which publicized the debate over the draft amendments in its internationally distributed publications, and attended a meeting at which religious groups expressed their concerns about the draft amendments to Parliamentarians.

The Embassy actively assisted the American citizens in Aktau who were ultimately expelled from the country for allegedly illegal religious activities. Embassy officers raised concerns about the charges and airport border police actions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, repeatedly sought clarification of the charges from local authorities in Aktau, and witnessed the court proceedings against the Americans. The Ambassador subsequently discussed the case with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President's National Security Adviser.

In May 2001, the Embassy sponsored the 10-day visit of a U.S. academic expert on Islam to conduct a series of programs on the role of Islam in a secular society. The scholar met with academic and religious leaders and lectured at universities in Almaty and southern Kazakhstan.

KYRGYZSTAN

The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however the Government restricts the activities of radical Islamic groups that it considers to be threats to national stability. The Constitution provides for a secular state and the separation of church and state, and the Government does not support any one religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government took steps to monitor and restrict Islamist groups, which it considers to be a threat to the country.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 67,741 square miles and its population is an estimated 4.7 million persons. The population is 61.2 percent ethnic Kyrgyz, 14.9 percent Russian, 14.4 percent ethnic Uzbek, 1.1 percent Tatar, 0.3 percent German, and 8.1 other minorities.

Islam is the single most widely practiced faith. Official sources estimate that up to 80 percent of the inhabitants are Muslims. The majority of these are Sunni and only a few Shi'a (approximately 1,000) live in the country. There are approximately 120 mosques, each with its own madrassa for initial religious training. There also are two institutes for higher Islamic teaching. Approximately 17 percent of the population are Russian Orthodox. There are 40 Russian Orthodox churches and more than 200 churches and houses of prayer for other Christian denominations. For example, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church operates six churches in Bishkek, as well as several elsewhere in the country. Jews, Buddhists, and Catholics account for approximately 3 percent of the population, and their adherents practice their religions openly in churches, temples, and synagogues. A Roman Catholic Church in Bishkek functions freely. A small Jewish congregation meets in Bishkek. The group organizes informal cultural studies and humanitarian services, chiefly food assistance for its elderly. In 2000 a new rabbi arrived from Israel. There also are examples of syncretistic religious practices. Most notably, there is a Baptist church in the Naryn region whose followers are predominantly ethnic Kyrgyz. While they worship as Christians, they have incorporated Muslim modes of prayer into their Christian rituals. There is no official estimate of the number of atheists in the population.

Islam is practiced widely throughout the country, in both the urban and rural areas. Russian Orthodoxy typically is concentrated in the cities where a larger eth-

nic Russian population exists. The other faiths also are practiced more commonly in the cities where their smaller communities tend to be concentrated. There is a correlation between ethnicity and religion; ethnic Kyrgyz primarily are Muslims, while ethnic Russians favor either the Russian Orthodox Church or one of the Western-origin denominations. Exact statistics are not available, but while the majority of the population claims to follow Islam, a significant number of these adherents appear to be only nominal believers and identify with the faith out of historical or ethnic allegiance. A significant number of the followers of the Russian Orthodox Church also appear to be only nominal believers.

A number of missionary groups operate in the country, including groups from the United States, Germany, and Korea, as well as missionaries from Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. They represent a variety of religious organizations including Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unified Church of Christ of Evangelists, and Korean Presbyterians.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government restricts the activities of radical Islamic groups that it considers threats to national stability. The Constitution provides for a secular state and the separation of church and state, and the Government does not support any one religion.

The State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA) promotes religious tolerance, protects freedom of conscience, and oversees laws on religion. According to a 1997 presidential decree, all religious organizations must be registered by the SCRA, which must recognize the registrant as a religious organization; each congregation must register separately. A religious organization also must register with the Ministry of Justice in order to obtain status as a legal entity—necessary to own property, open bank accounts, and otherwise engage in contractual activities. If a religious organization engages in commercial activity, it is required to pay taxes in accordance with the tax code. In practice the Ministry has never registered a religious organization without prior registration by the SCRA. The Ministry's registration process sometimes is cumbersome, taking a month on average, but no religious organization has been denied registration after properly completing all formalities. There are more than 300 registered religious groups, of which 210 are Christian. Several religious organizations, including the Roman Catholic Church, have reported difficulty registering with the state committee on religious affairs. The majority of these are small Christian congregations. According to a foreign attorney assisting the Government with legal reform, as many as 55 small Christian churches have not registered with the SCRA.

The country's Roman Catholic Church, whose members are comprised of approximately 80 percent Kyrgyz citizens, remains an unregistered foreign religious organization in the country despite the efforts of the Roman Catholic mission in the country to register with the SCRA. Bishkek's Roman Catholic Church first attained legal status under Soviet law in 1969. However, the SCRA notified the church that it would have to re-register as a foreign religion in the country after the issuance of Presidential Decree 319 in 1996. The Holy See established the Catholic Mission in Kyrgyzstan "sui juris" in 1997, and a representative from the Vatican visited the country in June 2001 to meet with SCRA members on behalf of registration. The Unification Church, which is registered as a social, rather than a religious organization, has "semi-official" status.

Various missionary groups operate freely, although they are required to register with the Government.

The Government expressly forbids the teaching of religion (or atheism) in public schools.

The Government recognizes three Muslim holidays (Noorus, Kurban Ait, and Orozo Ait) and one Russian Orthodox holiday (Christmas, which is observed on January 7 in accordance with the Russian Orthodox calendar) as national holidays. The President and the Government send greetings to the followers of these faiths on their major religious holidays, and these messages are printed in the mass media.

The Government works through the SCRA to promote interfaith dialog and encourage religious tolerance. The SCRA hosts meetings of religious groups to bring the faiths together in open forums. The SCRA assists various faiths to work together on programs for the protection of the poor and the elderly.

In March 2001, the Government met with representatives of various religions and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) to discuss a draft law on religion. The initial draft included compulsory registration of religious bodies, prohibition of unregis-

tered religious activity, lack of an alternative to military service, and tight control over religious activity deemed “destructive.” In mid-2001 the Parliament was working with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to revise the draft law in an effort to ensure that the law respects the country’s OSCE obligations and would allow free practice of religion by all faiths. However, representatives of the religious communities remain cautious and there is concern that Muslim believers could be mistaken for extremists under this law.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government is concerned about the threat of political Islam, whose followers (Islamists) it labels “Wahhabis.” The Government perceives Islamists to be a threat to national stability, particularly in the southern part of the country. The Government fears that Islamists seek to overthrow the secular government and establish an Islamic theocracy. Armed incursions of Islamic militants into the country in August to October 1999 and in August 2000 increased the Government’s concern regarding political Islam and the actions of its followers. Presidential Decree Number 319 states that a religious organization may be denied registration or its registration may be suspended if the organization’s activities do not comply with Kyrgyz law or is dangerous to state security, social stability, interethnic and inter-confessional relations, or the health and morals of the people. Such suspensions or refusals of a religious organization’s registration are subject to judicial appeal. On May 1, 2001, the Procurator General proposed amending the Criminal Code to include tougher sentences for those convicted of “religious extremism.” During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to express public concern about groups that it viewed as extremist with either radical religious or political agendas.

The Islamist organization “Hizb-Ut-Tahrir,” mainly active in the southern part of the country, is not registered with the Government and is considered to be an illegal organization.

In early April 2001, the local press quoted Prime Minister Bakiyev’s call for increased monitoring of mosques and schools in order to prevent these places from engaging in Islamic extremist activity.

Government authorities indicated that they would monitor the activities of the Unification Church, which is led by Reverend Moon. The Unification Church currently is not active in the country, but it has a presence through the charity organization of Reverend Moon’s wife. There were no reports of interference in its activities during the period covered by this report.

Religious leaders note with concern that the SCRA frequently uses the term “national security” in its statements. For example, the Commission has expressed some concern about the destabilizing presence of the Unification Church. The Ministry of Internal Affairs often plays a leading role on various religious questions.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

A press report quoting the State Committee of Religious Affairs, stated that over 200 persons were detained in Osh and Jalal Abad oblasts for distributing Hizb-Ut-Tahrir literature during 2000. According to the newspaper “Res Publica,” eight persons were arrested in August 2000 for distributing literature produced by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

The Government is concerned about the threat of political extremism in the guise of conservative Islam. The Government considers Islamic militants, whose followers it labels “Wahhabis,” a threat to the country’s stability. The Government fears that Wahhabis seek to overthrow the secular government and establish an Islamic theocracy. Muslim leaders, on the other hand, complain that the SCRA makes decisions about religious events without consulting them.

The sentencing in May 2000 of three Uighur Islamic militants, who were charged with the 1998 bombings in Osh, added to the Government’s concern about the “Wahhabist” elements operating in the country. An armed incursion of Islamic guerrillas into the southern part of the country in August to October 1999 also increased the Government’s apprehension about militant Islamic groups. A press report quoting the State Committee of Religious Affairs stated that over 200 persons were detained in Osh and Jalal Abad oblasts for distributing Hizb-Ut-Tahrir literature during 2000. According to the newspaper Res Publica, the authorities arrested eight persons in August 2000 for distributing literature produced by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

According to an Amnesty International report of June 21, 2000, Jelil Turdai, an ethnic Uighur Chinese national, was arrested in Bishkek for not having the necessary residence permit. After a police search of his apartment turned up religious material that was deemed fundamentalist, he was taken into custody for possessing

“Wahhabist” materials, and after being interrogated by Chinese and Kyrgyz security agents he was deported to China where his fate is unknown.

There were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Members of the two major religions, Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church, respect each other’s major holidays and exchange holiday greetings.

There is no evidence of widespread societal discrimination or violence against members of different religious groups. However, there is anecdotal evidence of periodic tension in rural areas between conservative Muslims and foreign missionaries and individuals from traditionally Muslim ethnic groups who convert to other faiths. In January 2001, there was a standoff in the village of Kurkol between local villagers and ethnic Uzbek Jehovah’s Witnesses. The standoff occurred when the villagers demanded that the four Uzbeks either reconvert to Islam or leave the village. The incident was resolved peacefully by the Ministry of Interior and the Security Service. There were no reports of these tensions escalating to serious levels; the parties involved appear to have resolved their problems peacefully over time.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy discussed the draft law on religion with several government officials. The Embassy maintains contacts with all religious organizations.

LATVIA

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

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, bureaucratic problems persist for some minority religions.

The generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, lingering suspicions remain towards newer nontraditional faiths.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 25,000 square miles and its population is estimated at 2.4 million. The three largest faiths are Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Orthodox Christianity. No precise denomination membership statistics are available. Sizeable religious minorities include Baptists, Pentecostals, and various evangelical Protestant groups. The once large Jewish community was virtually destroyed in the Holocaust during the 1941–44 German occupation and now totals only 6,000 persons.

As of February 2000, the Justice Ministry had registered over 1,000 congregations. This total includes: Lutheran (302), Roman Catholic (243), Orthodox (112), Baptist (85), Old Believer Orthodox (65), Seventh-Day Adventist (44), Jehovah’s Witnesses (11), Methodists (10), Jewish (7), Buddhist (3), Muslim (6), Hare Krishnas (8), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) (1), and over 100 others.

Interest in religion has increased markedly since independence. However, a large percentage of these adherents do not practice their faith regularly. Churches have provided the following estimates of church membership to the Justice Ministry: Lutherans (350,000), Roman Catholic (500,000), Orthodox (250,000), Baptist (6,000), Old Believer Orthodox (70,000), Seventh-Day Adventist (4,000), Jehovah’s Witnesses (2,000), Methodists (500), Jewish (6,000), Buddhist (100), Muslim (300), Hare

Krishnas (500), and Mormons (2,000). There are significant numbers of atheists, perhaps a majority of the population. Orthodox Christians, many of them Russian-speaking, noncitizen, permanent residents, are concentrated in the major cities, while many Catholics live in the east.

The Latvian Lutheran Church established its own clergy education center, the Luther Academy in Riga, in 1998. The Roman Catholic Church also has its own seminary. The University of Latvia's theological faculty is nondenominational.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. However, bureaucratic problems persist for some minority religions. There is no state religion; however, the Government distinguishes between "traditional" (Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believers, Baptists, and Jewish) and "new" religions.

Although the Government does not require the registration of religious groups, the 1995 Law on Religious Organizations accords religious organizations certain rights and privileges when they register, such as status as a separate legal entity for owning property or other financial transactions, as well as tax benefits for donors. Registration also eases the rules for public gatherings.

According to the Law on Religious Organizations, any 10 citizens or permanent residents over the age of 18 may apply to register a church. Asylum seekers, foreign embassy staff, and those in the country temporarily in a special status cannot register a religious organization. Congregations functioning in the country for the first time that do not belong to a church association already registered must reregister each year for 10 years. Ten or more congregations of the same denomination and with permanent registration status may form a religious association. Only churches with religious association status may establish theological schools or monasteries. A decision to register a church is made by the Minister of Justice. According to Ministry of Justice officials, most registration applications are approved eventually once proper documents are submitted; however, the law does not permit the simultaneous registration of more than one religious union (church) in a single confession, and the Government occasionally denies applications on this basis. The Board for Religious Affairs registered a Christian Science Congregation in the period covered by this report. Previously this registration had been prevented as a result of opposition from the Doctors' Association.

Property restitution has been completed substantially. The status of the remaining properties is unclear and is the subject of complicated legal and bureaucratic processes.

Citizens' passports indicate the ethnicity of the bearer. Jews are considered an ethnic group and are listed as such rather than as Latvian, Russian, etc.

December 25 is celebrated as Christmas and is a recognized national holiday. Good Friday and Easter Monday are also national holidays.

There is a New Religions Consultative Council whose membership consists of doctors, academics, and the independent human rights ombudsman. The Council, which meets on an "ad hoc" basis, can research and write opinions on specific issues, but has no decision-making authority. There also is a Traditional Religion Council, which meets monthly. This body reportedly aims at facilitating greater ecumenical communication, discussing matters of common concern and improving dialog between the traditional faiths and the State.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Problems arise and registration is denied because the Law on Religious Organizations does not permit simultaneous registration of more than one religious union (church) in a single confession, and the Government occasionally denies groups registration. Because of this provision, the Government does not register any splinter groups, including an independent Jewish congregation, the Latvian Free Orthodox Church, and a separate Old Believers group.

Visa regulations effective since July 1999 require religious workers to present either an ordination certificate or evidence of religious education that corresponds to a Latvian bachelor's degree in theology. The visa application process still is cumbersome. Nonetheless, the Government cooperated to resolve several difficult visa cases in favor of missionary workers. Difficulties in this area diminished and Citizenship and Migration Department officials have worked to ease the situation.

Foreign evangelists and missionaries, including from the United States, are permitted to hold meetings and to proselytize, but the law stipulates that only domestic

religious organizations may invite them to conduct such activities. Foreign religious denominations have criticized this provision.

The Law on Religious Organizations stipulates that religion may be taught to students in public schools on a voluntary basis only by representatives of Evangelical Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believer, Baptist, and Jewish religions. The State provides funds for this education. Students at state supported national minority schools also may receive education on the religion "characteristic of the national minority" on a voluntary basis. Other denominations may provide religious education in private schools only.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. Ecumenism still is a new concept in the country, and traditional religions have adopted a distinctly reserved attitude towards the concept. Although government officials are encouraging a broader understanding of and acceptance of newer religions, suspicions remain towards newer nontraditional faiths.

In April 1999, a bomb exploded at a Jewish Holocaust memorial just outside the city. Police have not identified those responsible for this incident.

The Latvian Historical Commission, under the sponsorship of President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, has continued to promote Holocaust awareness throughout all elements of society. This included an international academic conference on the Holocaust in Latvia. Other efforts include the funding of research into Jewish life, curriculum development seminars for educators, teaching materials for high schools, and the translation into Latvian of the highly regarded book for young adults, "Tell Ye Your Children." In addition, President Vike-Freiberga has continued to speak openly of the need to discuss frankly the country's history in relation to the Holocaust. This includes a firm government commitment to bring to justice those citizens accused of complicity in crimes against humanity. This commitment was demonstrated in the case of Konrads Kalejs, whose extradition from Australia is being sought in connection with his indictment for war crimes dating from his membership in the pro-Nazi Arajs Commando during World War II.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy worked to support the principle of religious freedom by engaging in regular exchanges with appropriate government bodies, non governmental organizations, and representatives of various religious confessions, including missionaries. The Embassy has been involved closely in the process of Jewish property restitution.

The Embassy actively supports the Latvian Historical Commission. It has funded the travel of Latvian scholars to the United States for education in ethnic and religious tolerance and of U.S. experts to Latvia for Historical Commission activities. The Embassy also sponsored a series of academic exchanges and lectures on Holocaust issues, including one by the Historian of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Embassy officials meet regularly with visiting missionary groups from the U.S. Embassy officials discussed problems that members of certain minority religions experienced at the Citizenship and Migration Department when seeking visas and residency permits.

LIECHTENSTEIN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 61.8 square miles and a total population of 32,015 (as of December 31, 1998, according to the Office of the National Economy). There are 24,993 Roman Catholics; 2,276 Protestants; 1,139 Muslims; 225 Eastern Orthodox; 2 Buddhists; 3 members of the Jehovah's Witnesses; 17 Anglicans; 15 Jews; 12 Baha'is; 11 New Apostolics; 7 members of other religions; 3,029 persons undecided.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Religious liberty is protected by article 37 of the Constitution, granting freedom of creed and conscience, and by Article 283 in the Criminal Code, prohibiting any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or any of its adherents.

Normally, church funding comes from the general budget, as decided by Parliament, and is not a direct "tithe" paid by the citizen. The Constitution establishes the Roman Catholic Church as the official state church of the country and its finances are integrated directly into the budgets of the national and local governments; approximately \$196,000 (CHF 300,000) was budgeted for 2000, plus additional sums from the 11 communes. However, the relationship between the State and the Roman Catholic Church currently is being redefined. As an interim solution, the State's financial contributions for 1999, 2000, and 2001 are paid into a special account. When a new agreement is reached (no later than 2002), the agreed amount will be released to the Catholic Church. The Government gives money not only to the Catholic Church but also to other denominations. The budget is allocated proportionately according to membership numbers. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups in the country. In order to receive a religious worker visa, an applicant must demonstrate that the host organization is important for the entire country. An applicant must have completed theological studies and be accredited to an acknowledged order. Visa requests normally are not denied and are processed in the same manner as requests from other individuals or workers.

Roman Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all schools, but the authorities routinely grant exemptions for children whose parents so request. Both religions typically are taught separately but simultaneously in primary and secondary schools, normally 2 hours per week.

The Government collaborates with religious institutions by supporting interfaith dialogs and providing adult education courses in religion as well as other subjects.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations between the religious communities. Catholics, Protestants, and members of other faiths work well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

LITHUANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion except in cases where religious activities contradict the Constitution and the law, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. There is no state religion; however, some religious groups enjoy government benefits not available to others. Nontraditional religious groups face some restrictions.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities, although members of religious minorities occasionally are subject to acts of intolerance. A certain level of anti-Semitic sentiment persists in the country.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has an area of 25,174 square miles and its population is approximately 3.5 million.

There are no official data on the number of adherents of various faiths. Unofficial estimates indicate that approximately 70 percent of the inhabitants consider themselves to be Roman Catholic (some 673 communities in 2000). The second largest religious group is the Orthodox Church (180,000 members and 43 communities), concentrated in the east, along the border with Belarus. The “Old Believers” number 50,000 and have 27 communities. Some 30,000 Lutherans (54 communities) are concentrated to the southwest. The Evangelical Reformed community has some 11,000 members in 12 communities. The 5 Sunni Muslim and 6 Jewish communities number about 5,000 members each, while the Greek Catholic community has about 900 members. Around 18 percent of the inhabitants do not identify with any religious denomination.

The Chabad Lubavich, an Orthodox Jewish group, operates a school (kindergarten through twelfth grade), a social center, and a kosher kitchen in the capital of Vilnius.

Karaites, while not unique to the country, exist in few other locations in the world. They are considered by some to be a branch of Judaism; their religion is based exclusively on the Old Testament. Two houses of worship in Vilnius and Trakai serve the Karaite religious community of approximately 250 members. The Karaites have been in the country since 1397. Considered as well to constitute a distinct ethnic group—Karaites speak a Turkic-based language and use the Hebrew alphabet—their community president is also their only religious leader.

According to the Ministry of Justice, a total of 923 traditional and 176 nontraditional religious associations and communities are registered.

According to data provided by religious groups, some 0.5 percent of the population belong to what the Government refers to as “nontraditional” religious communities. The most numerous are the Full Gospel Movement, Pentecostals/Charismatics, New Apostolic Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Baptists, and Seventh-Day Adventists.

Foreign missionary groups, including Baptists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah’s Witnesses, operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The Constitution provides that that a person’s freedom to profess and propagate his or her religion or faith “may be subject only to those limitations prescribed by law and only when such restrictions are necessary to protect the safety of society, public order, a person’s health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.” The religious teachings of churches and other religious organizations, their religious activities, and their houses of prayer may not be used for purposes that contradict the Constitution and the law. The freedom of expression of religious conviction also may be restricted temporarily during a period of martial law or a state of emergency. None of the limitations specified in the Constitution has been invoked.

There is no state religion. However, some religious groups enjoy government benefits not available to others.

The 1995 Law on Religious Communities and Associations grants property rights for prayer houses, homes, and other buildings to religious communities, associations,

and centers, and permits construction that is necessary for their activities. The law specifies nine religious communities that have been declared “traditional” and therefore are eligible for governmental assistance. They are Latin Rite Catholics, Greek Rite Catholics, Evangelical Lutherans, members of the Evangelical Reformed Church, Orthodox Christians (Moscow Patriarchate), Old Believers, Jews, Sunni Muslims, and Karaites. These traditional associations and communities receive annual financial support from the State. Other religious communities are not eligible for financial assistance from the Government, but there are no restrictions on their activities or property rights.

In 1999 the Seimas (Parliament) amended the Law on Religious Communities and Associations to provide funding from the national budget for the educational institutions of religious organizations designated as traditional. The governmental Department of European Law has warned publicly that this amendment discriminates in favor of these communities; the law is expected to take effect in September 2001.

There is no separate government agency dealing with religious groups, only a small department in the Ministry of Justice that handles requests of religious groups for registration.

Traditional religious associations and communities are not required to register their bylaws with the Ministry of Justice in order to receive legal status. However, nontraditional religious communities must present an application, a founding statement signed by no less than 15 members, and a description of their religious teachings and their aims. The Ministry must review the documents within 6 months.

The Constitution divides religious communities into state recognized traditional groups and others. However, in practice a four-tier system exists: Traditional, state recognized, registered, and unregistered communities. The Law on Religious Communities and Associations stipulates that nontraditional religious communities may be granted state recognition if they are “backed by society” and have been registered in the country for at least 25 years. Both traditional and state recognized communities can receive state subsidies; they do not have to pay social and health insurance for clergy and other employees; their clergy and theological students are exempt from military service; and they are not subject to VAT tax on such services as electricity, telephone, and heat. However, only traditional communities have the right to teach religion in state schools and buy land to build churches (other communities can rent it). Religious communities registered by the Ministry of Justice constitute the third status group; they do not receive subsidies, tax exemptions, social benefits, or military exemptions enjoyed by traditional and state recognized communities but can act as legal entities and thus rent land for religious buildings. There are also unregistered communities. They have no juridical status or state privileges, but there are no reports that any such groups were prevented from worshiping or seeking members.

Relations between the Government and the officially registered Jewish community are good. In May 1999, the Minister of Justice recognized the Hasidic Chabad Lubavich community as a traditional religious organization. The Ministry of Justice previously had argued that the community was not a part of the country’s historical, spiritual, or social heritage and therefore could not be registered as traditional.

In July 2000, the Government and the Holy See agreed to establish a military Ordinariat to provide religious support to Catholic members of the military service in the form of military chaplains. The Ministry of Defense provides material support for the Ordinariat and its places of worship. Other traditional churches and religious groups can also provide religious support to the military services. Alternative military service is available, but there is no option for alternative nonmilitary service, as demanded by members of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

In August 2000, three agreements between the Government and the Holy See took effect: “On Cooperation in the Sphere of Education and Culture,” “On Spiritual Guidance of Catholics Serving in the Military,” and “On Legal Aspects of Relations Between the Catholic Church and the State.” The last of these agreements established Assumption Day (August 15) as a national holiday, in addition to the previously established holidays of St. Mary’s celebration (January 1), Easter Monday, All Saint’s Day (November 1), Christmas, and Boxing Day (December 26). The list of holidays can be changed by agreement of both sides. There is no direct evidence that these agreements adversely affect religious freedom for the adherents of other religions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Nontraditional religious communities must submit an application and supporting documents to the Ministry of Justice in order to receive legal status. Since 1995 the Ministry of Justice has turned down two applications, those of the Osho Ojas Meditation Center and the Lithuanian Pagans Community. Both were rejected because

the authorities concluded that these groups were nonreligious. They were advised to register as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) instead.

While the operations of foreign missionary groups within the country are not restricted, nontraditional foreign religious workers must obtain work permits, and they face difficult bureaucratic requirements in obtaining residence permits from officials who regard them as representatives of "cults" and "sects." Several foreign missionary groups complained in mid-1999 over a change in temporary residency requirements. These groups encountered problems with the Government's new procedures (enacted by law in 1999) requiring residency permits for religious workers. Most of these problems had been resolved by mid-2001.

According to the Constitution, state and local teaching and education establishments are secular. The Law on Religious Communities and Associations provides that only religious instruction of traditional and other state-recognized religious communities may be taught in state educational institutions. At the request of parents from these communities, schools can offer classes in religious instruction. In practice, parents can choose classes in religious instruction or classes in ethics for nonreligious education. However, nontraditional religious communities have the right to establish schools of their own.

The 1995 Law on Procedures for the Restoration of the Rights of Religious Communities to Existing Real Property granted all religious communities equal opportunity in regaining control over former property used for conducting religious services. However, the Catholic community has been more successful in regaining its property than many other religious communities. Some religious property, including 26 synagogues, was returned to the Jewish community, mostly from 1993 to 1996.

The deadline for filing claims has passed. A number of claims have been successfully resolved, and others still are pending. Lack of funds for compensation and protracted bureaucratic obstacles are the primary problems preventing the return of private property. The Government has taken no action on the problem of restoring property of religious institutions that no longer exist and has no plans to do so.

On April 18, 2001, the Vilnius First District Court ruled that the Vilnius City Council had violated the previous owners' and tenants' rights when returning 4 buildings to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1992 and 1993. The Court abrogated the decision of the Vilnius Council on Property Restitution. The Church appealed, asserting that it had owned the properties before they were nationalized in 1945 and that restitution had been carried out according to the law.

In April 2000, the Government established a commission to coordinate the activities of governmental institutions in order to investigate whether the activities of religious, esoteric, or spiritual groups comply with the law. It includes representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, the General Prosecutor's office, and the State Security Department. The Minister of Justice appoints the chairman of the commission. The commission was established following some parliamentarians' calls for increased control of "sects," following negative coverage of some religious groups in the media. The commission takes as its guidance domestic laws and the recommendations (No. 1412 and No. 1178) of the Council of Europe, which seek to ensure that activities of religious groups are in line with the principles of a democratic society, human rights and fundamental freedoms. As of mid-2001, the commission had taken no action and made no statements affecting specific religious groups.

Local media reported that the security services monitored the activities of the NGO "Collegiate Association for the Research of the Principle," Jehovah's Witnesses, and a visiting member of the Russian Vissarion Church. In June 2000, the Ministry of Justice warned the "Collegiate Association for the Research of the Principle" to discontinue its religious activities (they were proselytizing on behalf of the Unification Church, an activity that was not described in their own statutes, and thus violated the Law on Public Organizations.)

The nontraditional Word of Faith Church (a charismatic Protestant Church) has expressed concern that Vilnius county and district authorities refuse to register a private school established by the Church. The problem emerged when the school, which operates under a license issued by the Education and Science Ministry, relocated in 1999 from Vilnius city to Vilnius county. The Vilnius county authorities claimed that they were asked to "freeze" the registration of the school by the special services, which investigated activities of the Word of Faith Church. The problem remained unresolved as of mid-2001.

There was one unconfirmed complaint about a civil servant being denied promotion to a higher position on the grounds of religious affiliation.

There were no reports of religious prisoners of detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On June 13, 2000, after reviewing an appeal by several members of Parliament, the Constitutional Court confirmed the principle of separation between church and state in the sphere of education. The Court ruled that in state educational institutions, classes or groups may not be coestablished with state-recognized traditional religious associations. The Court also ruled that if educational establishments are sponsored jointly by a state institution and a religious group, the group cannot set any religious test for employment of staff not connected with religious instruction. Finally, the Court ruled that the heads of state educational establishments could not be appointed and dismissed by government institutions on the recommendation of a religious association. The Catholic Church criticized the Court's ruling.

In March 2001, the Government abolished the position of advisor for religious affairs, established in 1993. The former advisor admitted in a public interview that the Catholic Lithuanian Bishops' Conference had proposed his candidacy. This decision contributed to a more evenhanded approach to religious matters.

In the period from January 2000 to April 2001, the Ministry of Justice registered 13 nontraditional religious groups and granted 41 traditional religious communities legal person status. The Parliament's Human Rights Committee recommended that the Parliament extend state recognition to the Baptist community. Legally, the status of "state recognized" religious community is higher than that of a "registered" community but lower than that of the "traditional" community.

In December 2000, the Ministry of Justice and the Government's inter-agency commission organized an International Conference on Law and Religion in Lithuania, sponsored by a foreign NGO and foreign academic institutions. The conference was seen by the participants as a contribution to interfaith dialog.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities, although members of religious minorities occasionally are subjected to acts of intolerance, such as insults.

An estimated 10 percent of the population before World War II were Jewish. Over 200,000 Jews (about 95 percent of that population) were killed in the Holocaust. The country still is reconciling itself with its past and working to understand it better. President Valdas Adamkus established a historical commission in August 1998 to investigate both the crimes of the Holocaust and the subsequent Soviet occupation. The commission has held three annual conferences and several seminars and has filed three reports; many more reports were pending as of June 30, 2001. A government-sponsored international forum on Holocaust-era looted cultural assets took place in October 2000. Alleged war criminal Aleksandras Lileikis, the former head of the security police of the Vilnius district under Nazi control, died on September 27, 2000, at age 93, without facing trial. On February 14, 2001, the Vilnius District Court's College for Criminal Cases found Kazys Gimzauskas, Lileikis' deputy, guilty of genocide committed in Lithuania during the Nazi occupation. The court closed the case, but did not sentence Gimzauskas, who was judged to be mentally ill.

Beginning in 1999 the country's Jewish communities expressed increased concern by over anti-Semitic remarks made by some politicians. Such anti-Semitic comments continued during the period covered by this report; however, the political leadership and the national press condemned the anti-Semitic statements of fringe political groups. In October 2000, a politician known for making anti-Semitic and derogatory comments towards Jews and foreigners was elected to the Parliament. He had won election in 1999 as mayor of the country's second largest city, Kaunas.

In April 2000, the country's Catholic Church issued an apology for indifference and crimes committed by Lithuanians during the Holocaust. The statement included the first recognition by the Church that some Lithuanians participated in the killing and mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust.

A number of ecumenical organizations operate in the country. An NGO, Research and Information Center for New Religions was established in Vilnius in May 2001 to provide objective information about new religions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains a close and regular dialog on religious issues with senior officials in the Government, Members of Parliament, and presidential advi-

sors, as well as continual contact with religious leaders. Religious groups use the Embassy as a vehicle to voice their complaints and the Embassy encourages religious leaders to keep the Embassy informed of their views on the status of religious freedom and any complaints.

The Embassy maintains regular contact with U.S. missionary groups.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy's democracy commission funded a number of projects with the goal of promoting greater religious tolerance, particularly those related to building broader understanding of the Holocaust.

LUXEMBOURG

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 998.5 square miles and its population is approximately 437,000. The country is historically Roman Catholic, and Catholicism remains the predominant faith. According to a 1979 law, the Government may not collect or maintain statistics on religious affiliation; however, over 90 percent of the population is estimated to be baptized Catholic. The Lutheran and Calvinist churches are the largest Protestant denominations. Muslims are estimated to number about 6,000 persons, including 1,500 refugees from Montenegro; Greek Orthodox adherents are estimated to number about 1,500 persons; and there are approximately 1,000 Jews. The Baha'i faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Universal Church, and members of Jehovah's Witnesses are represented in smaller numbers. The number of professed atheists reportedly is growing.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups. Many religious groups described as "sects" have representations in the country. They are expected to obey the law, but their activities have not become significant political or social issues.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no state religion. The State does not register religions or religious groups. However, based on the Concordat of 1801, when the country was under Napoleonic rule, some churches receive financial support from the State. The Constitution specifically provides for state payment of the salaries of clergy. Currently, after negotiated agreements with the Government, the following religious groups receive such support: Roman Catholic, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Jewish, and some Protestant denominations. Applications for financial support from the Anglican Church and the Muslim community have been under consideration for over 4 years without resolution.

There is a long tradition of religious education in public schools. A 1997 convention between the Minister of National Education and the Roman Catholic Archbishop governs religious instruction. In accordance with this convention, religious instruction is a local matter, coordinated at the communal level between representatives of the Catholic Church and communal authorities. Government-paid lay teachers provide instruction (totaling 2 school hours) at the primary school level. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Roman Catholicism or an ethics course; requests for exemption from religious instruction are addressed on an individual basis. Although approximately 85 percent of primary school students choose religious instruction, the number drops to 65 percent for high school students. The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist Churches have an agreement for the provision of instruction in the Protestant religions within the overall framework of reli-

religious instruction in the school system. There are oral agreements between Catholics and Protestants at the local level to provide religious instruction to Protestant students, as required, during school hours. Protestant instruction is available on demand, and provision of instruction in other faiths may develop in response to demand.

The State subsidizes private religious schools. All private, religious, and non-sectarian schools are eligible for and receive government subsidies. The State also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths work well together on an interfaith basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting of human rights.

MACEDONIA, FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF

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

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, beginning in early spring of 2001, an armed conflict began between the Government and armed ethnic Albanian extremists. While religion has not been a focus of the conflict, both sides have occasionally targeted religious buildings due to the linkage between religion and ethnicity in the country. The law places some limits on religious practice by restricting the establishments of places of worship and restricting where contributions may be made.

In 2000 both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the various religious communities contributed to the free practice of religion. However, the religious communities often reflect an ethnic identity as well, and during 2001 societal tensions increased.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 9,781 square miles and its population is approximately 2 million. The country has three major religions. Nominally, about 66 percent of the population are Macedonian Orthodox, about 30 percent are Muslim, about 1 percent are Roman Catholic, and about 3 percent are of other faiths (largely various Protestant denominations). There is also a small Jewish community in Skopje. Numerous foreign missionaries are active and represent a very wide range of faiths. Many of these missionaries enter the country in connection with other work, often charitable or medical. Several Protestant missionary groups and Jehovah's Witnesses are active. Religious participation tends to focus on major holidays or life cycle events.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. However, the law places some limits on religious

practices including the establishment of places of worship and the collection of contributions. Despite the specific mention of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the Constitution, that Church does not have official status.

The constitutional provision for religious freedom is refined further in the 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups. This law designates the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic community, and the Roman Catholic Church as religious communities, and all other religions as religious groups. However, there is no legal differentiation between religious communities and groups. In early 1999, the Constitutional Court struck down several provisions of the 1997 law, and in practice the remaining provisions of the law are not enforced consistently. A committee has been formed to draft a new law.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. The 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups contained a number of specific requirements for the registration of religious groups that were struck down by the Constitutional Court in early 1999. Consequently, there was considerable confusion over which procedures still applied, and several foreign religious bodies experienced delays in their efforts to register. During the period covered by this report, the process remained slow and cumbersome. In practice, religious groups need to register to obtain permits to build churches, and to request visas for foreigners and other permits from the Government. During 2000 several international Protestant churches were granted legal registration, and several others were at some stage in the process as of the end of the period covered by this report. One Islamic group withdrew its 1998 application for registration but continues to operate openly without taking further steps toward legal registration. The Government has not taken any enforcement actions against the group. The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups also requires that foreign nationals carrying out religious work and religious rites be registered with the Government's Commission on Relations with the Religious Communities. The Government does not actively monitor new groups or advise the public on them.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups places some restrictions on the establishment of places of worship. It provides that religious rites and religious activities "shall take place at churches, mosques, and other temples, and in gardens that are parts of those facilities, at cemeteries, and at other facilities of the religious group." Provision is made for holding services in other places, provided that a permit is obtained at least 15 days in advance. No permit or permission is required to perform religious rites in a private home. The law also states that religious activities "shall not violate the public peace and order, and shall not disrespect the religious feelings and other freedoms and rights" of persons who are not members of that particular religion. The Government does not actively enforce most of these provisions of the law but acts upon complaints when they are received.

Several registered Protestant groups have been unable to obtain building permits for new church facilities due to normal bureaucratic complications that affect all new construction. Churches and mosques often are built without the appropriate building permits. The Government has not taken any actions against religious buildings that lack proper construction permits.

The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups also places some limitations on the collection of contributions by restricting them only to places where religious rites and activities are conducted.

Children below the age of 10 years may not receive religious instruction without the permission of their parents or guardians.

The 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups specifically allows for foreign citizens to carry out religious activities, but only at the request of a registered religious body. Because many evangelical Christian missionaries wish to conduct religious activities that are aimed at the creation of new groups of believers, rather than at operating through existing churches, some foreign missionaries have chosen to disregard this portion of the law. This approach has on occasion led to difficulties for those missionaries, as the authorities have questioned their actual reasons for entering the country, usually on tourist visas. During the period covered by this report, several missionaries with improper immigration status were able to obtain religious worker visas. Several applications still were pending in June 2001.

The issue of restitution of previously state-owned religious properties has not been resolved fully. Many churches and mosques had extensive grounds or other properties that were expropriated by the Communist regime. Virtually all churches and mosques have been returned to the ownership of the appropriate religious community, but that is not the case for many of the other properties. Often the claims are complicated by the fact that the seized properties have changed hands many times

or have been developed. In view of the country's very limited financial resources, it is unlikely that religious communities can expect to regain much from the expropriated properties.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the anti-Albanian riots in June 2001 in Bitola, during which rioters vandalized the village mosque (see Section III), local police reportedly did not take any actions to stop the attacks. According to nongovernmental observers, some witnesses claimed that a few police officers allegedly participated in the riots. The riots broke out after several Bitola police officers were killed by ethnic Albanian extremists. [P1]

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In 2000 both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the various religious communities contributed to the free practice of religion. However, the religious communities often reflect an ethnic identity as well, and during 2001 societal tensions increased.

During the period covered by this report, there has been an ongoing armed conflict between the Government and armed ethnic Albanian extremists. While religion has not been a focus of the conflict, both sides have occasionally targeted religious buildings due to the linkage between religion and ethnicity in the country.

The religious communities in the country often reflect an ethnic identity as well. Specifically, most Muslims are ethnic Albanians, while virtually all Macedonian Orthodox believers are ethnic Macedonians. Societal discrimination is more likely to be based upon ethnic bias than upon religious prejudice.

During the period covered by this report, there were two significant anti-Albanian riots in Bitola, in April and June, which displayed anti-Muslim attitudes. In June 2001, rioters vandalized the Bitola mosque, breaking windows, setting fire to the mosque interior, and breaking open several graves. Rioters also sprayed swastikas and anti-Albanian graffiti on the mosque.

In the fall of 2000, local skinheads desecrated the Jewish cemetery in Bitola. The city government, in a gesture of tolerance, agreed to pay to repair the damage.

The leaders of the long-established Orthodox, Muslim, and Roman Catholic communities have better connections within the Government than do the leaders of new churches, and there were some indications of an effort by the established religions to use that influence to shut out newcomers.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy initiated an extensive dialog with the Government's Commission on Relations with the Religious Communities, the office charged with the implementation of the Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups. This contact was sought after several American missionaries advised the Embassy that they were having difficulties in their efforts to register their organizations or workers.

The Embassy also intervened successfully to help seven U.S. missionaries to regularize their status in the country. The missionaries had encountered bureaucratic obstruction in their attempts to obtain religious worker visas.

The leaders of the various religious communities in the country, as well as the head of the Commission on Religious Communities and Religious Groups, met with the Ambassador on several occasions during the period covered by this report.

MALTA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion.

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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country, which consists of three islands in the Mediterranean Sea, has a total land area of 122 square miles and its population is 391,670. The overwhelming majority of citizens (approximately 95 percent) are Roman Catholic, and approximately 65 percent attend services regularly. While some political leaders diverge from Catholicism, most of the country's political leaders also are Roman Catholic.

Most congregants at the local Protestant churches are not Maltese; many British retirees live in the country, and vacationers from many other nations compose the remainder of such congregations. An indigenous Christian fundamentalist movement has begun to develop; it remains small and consists of a group of about 400 citizens, but it is growing rapidly. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) also have an active missionary presence. There is one Muslim mosque and one Jewish congregation. Zen Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith also have centers. Of the 2,500 Muslims, 2,000 are foreigners, 400 are naturalized citizens, and 100 are native-born Maltese.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, and declares that the authorities of the Catholic Church have "the authority to teach which principles are right and which are wrong." The Government and the Catholic Church participate in a foundation that finances Catholic schools. The Church transferred nonpastoral land to this foundation as part of the 1991 Ecclesiastical Entitles Act. There is one Muslim private school. Some governmental policies, such as a ban on divorce, reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Since 1991 churches of all kinds (not just the Roman Catholic Church) have had similar legal rights: religious organizations can own property such as buildings, and their ministers can perform marriages and other functions.

While religious instruction in Catholicism is compulsory in all state schools, the Constitution establishes the right not to receive this instruction if the student (or guardian, in the case of a minor) objects.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The Roman Catholic Church makes its presence and its influence felt in everyday life. However, converts from Catholicism do not face legal or societal discrimination, and relations between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations generally are characterized by respect and cooperation.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Whenever possible, the Embassy advocates continuous observance of basic human rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Both the Embassy's private discussions with government officials and its informational programs for the public consistently emphasize these points.

MOLDOVA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law includes restrictions that at times inhibited the activities of some religious groups.

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. However, the Government continued to uphold its earlier decisions to deny two groups registration during the period covered by this report, and in the separatist region of Transnistria, a number of minority religious groups have been denied registration.

In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities; however, some incidents of harassment occurred.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 13,000 square miles and its population is approximately 4½ million. The Moldovan Orthodox Church is the predominant religion. Over 90 percent of the population nominally belong to the Orthodox Church (with the Moldovan Church claiming over 1,000 parishes and the Bessarabian Church claiming close to 100). The religious traditions of the Orthodox Church are entwined with the culture and patrimony of the country. Many self-professed atheists routinely celebrate religious holidays, cross themselves, and even light candles and kiss icons if the occasion demands. Followers of the Old Russian Orthodox Church (Old Believers) make up approximately 3.6 percent of the population. Other registered groups include: Roman Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, Jews, followers of Reverend Moon, Molocans (a Russian sect), Messianic Jews (Jews who believe that Jesus was the Messiah), Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Hare Krishnas. Some other charismatic Christian groups and evangelical Christian groups also are registered. Although it has faced bureaucratic obstacles to registration, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) has 3 congregations with some 140 members. The Jewish community has approximately 31,200 members, with about 20,000 living in Chisinau, 3,000 in Balti, 2,200 in Tiraspol, 2,000 in Benderi, and 4,000 in small towns. Since the 1970's, Jews have been emigrating out of Moldova. At first they emigrated almost exclusively to Israel, but as restrictions eased, they also emigrated to the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Since the fall of the former Soviet Union, Moldovan Jews have emigrated to other European countries, notably Germany. There are 9 synagogues in Chisinau, Balti, Tiraspol, Rybnitsa, and Bender; about 5,000 persons celebrate Rosh Hashanah.

Foreign missionaries represent many faiths and denominations.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a 1992 law on religion that codifies religious freedoms contains restrictions that has inhibited the activities of some religious groups. The law provides for freedom of religious practice, including each person's right to profess his religion in any form. It also protects the confidentiality of the confessional, allows denominations to establish associations and foundations, and states that the Government may not interfere in the religious activities of denominations. However, the law prohibits "abusive proselytizing" and requires that religious groups register with the Government. There is no state religion; however, the Moldovan Orthodox Church receives some special treatment from the Government. The Metropolitan of Chisinau and All Moldova has a diplomatic passport. Other high-ranking Orthodox Church officials also reportedly have diplomatic passports issued by the Government.

The procedures for registering a religious organization are the same for all groups. Under the Law on Religions, an organization wishing to register must submit a request to the Cabinet. The Department of Religions examines the required statutes and organization chart of the religious body, determines if Moldovan citizens are the officers of the central authority of the Moldovan branch of the religion (as required by law), and examines if its beliefs go against the Constitution or any other laws of the country. The final recognition or rejection is by Government decree, signed by the Prime Minister and printed in the Official Gazette. The Govern-

ment has recognized 20 religious organizations. Three religious organizations either began or continued the registration process in 2000. The Government registered the Evangelist Lutheran Church in July 1999; however, the Government upheld its previous decisions to deny registration to the Church of the True Orthodox-Moldova (a branch of the Russian Overseas Orthodox Church) and the Mitropolia Basarabiei (Bessarabian Orthodox Church). Two additional religious organizations have faced obstacles to the acceptance of their pending applications for registration: the Mormons and the Spiritual Organization of Muslims in Moldova (Islam).

Foreign missionaries are allowed to enter the country; however, they experience the same difficulties in getting residence permits and customs clearances as other foreign workers.

In February 2000, Parliament passed a decree making "moral and spiritual" instruction mandatory for primary school students and optional for secondary and university students. The Ministry of Education had planned for the instruction to begin in September 2000. However, difficulties arose in establishing the nature of this religious instruction. These difficulties, combined with the chronic financial problems of the country's schools, delayed indefinitely the implementation of the decree. There are two public schools and a kindergarten open only to Jewish students. These schools receive the same funding as the state schools, and are supplemented by financial support from the community. Jewish students are not restricted to these schools. There are no comparable schools for Moldovan Orthodox believers and no reports of such schools for other religious faiths. Agudath Israel has operated a private boys' yeshiva, licensed by the Ministry of Education, since 1991, and opened a girls' yeshiva in November 1999. There are a number of theological institutes, seminaries, and other places of religious education throughout the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government cited Article 15 of the Law on Cults to justify its decision not to recognize component parts or schismatic movements of a religion. However, this law seems to be applied only to the country's main religion, as both the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Reform Movement Seventh Day Adventist Church are recognized as separate religions. The Government continued to uphold its denial of registration to the Church of the True Orthodox-Moldova (a branch of the Russian Overseas Orthodox Church) and the Mitropolia Basarabiei (Bessarabian Orthodox Church). The groups were denied on the grounds that they are schismatic movements within the Orthodox Church. Both are appealing the decisions through the legal structures. In early 2001, the True Orthodox-Moldova tried again to register, starting the process anew with updated documents and new hearings scheduled in the Court of Appeals. However, in May 2001, the Court of Appeals postponed its hearing of the case. It again reiterated that the Government cannot legally register a component or a schismatic part of an already registered religion. The True Orthodox-Moldova Church representatives now face counter-charges and petitions against them (see Section III).

The Government has denied recognition to the Bessarabian Orthodox Church in 1992, twice in 1996, and in 1997. During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to uphold its denial ruling. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church was formed in 1992 when a number of priests broke away from the Moldovan Orthodox Church, which is subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church, which sees itself as the legal and canonical successor to the pre-World War II Romanian Orthodox Church in Bessarabia (the part of Moldova between the Nistru and Prut Rivers), subordinated itself to the Bucharest Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Since 1992 the Government consistently has refused to register the Bessarabian Church, citing unresolved property claims and stating that the Bessarabian Church is a "schismatic movement." The issue has political as well as religious overtones, as it raises the question as to whether the Orthodox Church should be united and oriented toward Moscow, or divided with a branch oriented toward Bucharest. (Leaders of the Moldovan Orthodox Church appear more interested in independence than in links to Moscow.) In 1997 the Supreme Court overturned an appellate court decision affirming the right of the Bessarabian Church to register with the Government. However, the Supreme Court's decision was based on a procedural issue rather than on the merits of the case. The Bessarabian Church appealed the case to the European Court of Human Rights in June 1998. The Government submitted its response in February 2000, which argued that registering the Bessarabian Church would interfere with an internal matter of the Moldovan Orthodox Church. In May 2001, the European Court of Human Rights agreed to hear the case. In its decision, the Court stated that the Moldovan Government has already recognized other seemingly schismatic or component movements as religions. The Court cited as examples the recognition of the Seventh-Day Ad-

ventist Church, the Federation of Jewish Communities and the Union of Messianic Jewish Communities, and the Orthodox Church of Moldova and the Russian Old Rite Orthodox Church.

Unregistered religions cannot buy land or obtain construction permits for churches or seminaries. Members of unregistered religions hold services in homes, non-governmental organization (NGO) offices, and other locations.

The Mormons faced bureaucratic obstacles to their registration at the end of the reporting period and continue to try to work within the Government's State Service for Religions.

In November 2000, the Spiritual Organization of Muslims in Moldova (Muslims) were refused registration by the Government. They took their case to the Supreme Court of Appeals in February 2001; in May 2001, the Supreme Court sent the Spiritual Organization of Muslims in Moldova's registration case back to the Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court advised both the Muslims' representatives and the Government's representatives to follow the strict procedures of the law, since not all of these had been followed during the registration process.

The law on religion as amended to legalize proselytizing—in principle bringing the legislation in line with the European Convention on Human Rights—went into effect in June 1999. However, the law explicitly forbids "abusive proselytizing," which is defined as "an attempt to influence someone's religious faith through violence or abuse of authority." Thus far authorities have not taken legal action against individuals for proselytizing.

The law provides for restitution to politically repressed or exiled persons whose property was confiscated during the successive Nazi and Soviet regimes. This regulation has been extended in effect to religious communities; however, the Moldovan Orthodox Church has been favored over other religious groups in this area. The Church had little difficulty in recovering nearly all of its property and, in cases where property was destroyed, the Government offered alternative compensation. The Church has recovered churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and administrative properties. Property disputes between the Moldovan and Bessarabian Churches have not been resolved. The Jewish community has had mixed results in recovering its property. The Baptist Church has only one remaining property restitution claim. In May 2001, the Molocans appealed to the Parliament to hear their property restitution case, but the Parliament denied their request, voting that the case was not within their jurisdiction. There has been no other movement on this case during the period covered by this report.

The law in Transnistria (a separatist region not under the control of the Government) prohibits renting houses, premises of enterprises, or "cultural houses" for prayer meetings. Evangelical religious groups meeting in private homes have been told that they do not have the correct permits to use their residences as churches.

In January 1998, the authorities in Transnistria canceled the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses. Repeated attempts by members of Jehovah's Witnesses to reregister have been denied or delayed. Transnistrian officials regularly confiscate religious tracts from members of Jehovah's Witnesses, most recently in January 2000, because the group is not registered properly, but no new incidents were reported during the period covered by this report. According to local leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses, two preachers were arrested and detained for several days in April 1999. The Methodist Church was denied registration in late 2000. The Church of the Living God has been denied registration in five towns in Transnistria. The Baptist community is growing and has reported no problems in Transnistria during the period covered by this report. The Baptist community in Bendery has approximately 250 members and has a church, the Church of Evangelist Christian Baptists. The Baptist community in Tiraspol has approximately 180 members. Both communities failed to reregister under new legislation, but have not reported any problems with the local authorities over their lack of local registration. In the past, non-Orthodox groups complained that they generally were not allowed to rent property and often were harassed during religious services.

In April 2001, Russian Patriarch Alexei II named Tiraspol Bishop Justinian to the post of Rector of the Theological Seminary at the Noul Neamt Monastery in Chitcani. The monastery is on the western bank of the Nistru River and traditionally has come under the religious authority of Chisinau Bishop Vladimir, although the area is under the de facto control of the separatist regime in Transnistria. The monks resisted the appointment, and Bishop Justinian used the Transnistrian military to force his entry into the monastery. Further confrontation took place when Bishop Justinian stopped the Mass due to the refusal of the monks to accept him. The monastery Abbot appealed to Moldovan Bishop Vladimir who, they believe, has jurisdiction in the case, but he refused to support them. Moldovan President Voronin tried to visit the monastery, claiming that he wanted to go there "as a sim-

ple Christian,” but was not allowed to cross the border into the separatist region. This seemingly jurisdictional conflict is reviving ethnic and church tensions within the country.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the various religious communities. The dispute between the Moldovan and Bessarabian Orthodox Churches is ongoing (see Section II), but the members generally worship freely. However, in several towns where there is a True Orthodox congregation, opponents have taken signed petitions to local governments and courts, stating that citizens oppose the existence of a True Orthodox-Moldova Church in their town and claim it would violate their human rights. When legal representatives for the Church examined these petitions, they reportedly found many names of incarcerated persons and the deceased among the supposed signatories. The priest of the first True Orthodox-Moldova Church reportedly has been harassed and threatened. Local church member volunteers reportedly sleep in his house to protect him.

Disputes surrounding the Bessarabian Church and the Noul Neamt Monastery reflect a fundamental social issue in the country: whether it should be Westward-looking, Romanian-speaking, and aligned with Romania; or Eastward-looking, Russian-speaking, and aligned with Russia. This issue complicates some conflicts that otherwise would appear to be internal religious problems. For example, the Noul Neamt Monastery was founded by monks from Romania and has remained an outpost of the Romanian language and Romanian customs. Upon the appointment of Transnistrian Bishop Justinian as Rector, monks claimed that the “Russification” of the Moldovan Church had begun.

Some desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Transnistria has occurred. Transnistrian authorities sent workers to remove the graffiti.

In May 1999, a group of about 500 Orthodox Christians and between 4 and 6 priests attacked a small group of Baptists in the village of Mingir, injured 3 persons, and partially destroyed a Baptist church that was under construction. The Ministry of Internal Affairs investigated the case, but no charges ever were filed. The village mayor who was implicated in the incident lost his bid for reelection. The Baptist Church was allowed to register locally, and the church building now is completed. The church holds regularly scheduled services and activities. There have been no further reports of problems for the Baptists in this community.

In 2000 the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Moldova hosted several roundtable discussions on freedom of religion. The Helsinki Committee remains active in the field of religious rights, and provided legal assistance for the Muslims’ case in the Supreme Court of Justice and legal advice for the True Orthodox-Moldova Church’s case in the Court of Appeals.

The independent press occasionally writes very negative articles about religions other than the Orthodox Church. One example was the April 10, 2001 article in the National Journal entitled, “Sects in Moldova Recruit Followers by Promising Them Everything, After Which they Separate Them from God Forever.” Several representatives of religious groups complained that this article was biased, especially in the way that it focused on the less mainstream groups. They also complained that the article linked their religions with other, more extreme groups. A June 8, 2001 article in *Dialog*, a weekly newspaper, was entitled “Snares of the Sects.” It alleged that foreign religions disguise themselves by registering as humanitarian or cultural organizations in order to hide their church activities. This article specifically cited the Muslims and the followers of Reverend Moon.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officers have met with Baptist leaders and government officials to discuss the restitution of Baptist property in Chisinau. Embassy officers have met with Mormon, Muslim, Jewish, True Orthodox, and Bessarabian Orthodox leaders, and their legal representatives, to discuss registration, restitution, and any other problems their religious organizations have had with the Moldovan authorities. An Embassy officer attended the Supreme Court hearing on the Muslim organization’s case.

The U.S. Ambassador met with leaders of the major religious organizations at various times during the period covered by this report. Embassy employees maintain official or social contact with most of the resident American missionaries. The Embassy has supported religious (and secular) groups that provide humanitarian assistance to the country.

The Embassy's human rights officer maintains regular contact with religious leaders throughout the country, including in the separatist Transnistria region.

MONACO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government denies permission to operate to religious organizations regarded as "sects."

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The principality has a total land area of .8 square miles and its population is 31,693. Roman Catholicism is the state religion, and most of the approximately 5,000 Monegasque citizens living in the principality adhere to that religion, at least nominally. There are five Catholic churches in the principality and a cathedral presided over by an archbishop. Protestantism is the next most practiced religion, with two churches. The Constitution guarantees the nearly 25,000 noncitizens resident in the principality the same religious freedom as citizens. Most noncitizens also adhere to either Catholicism or Protestantism, although there are some residents who adhere to Judaism, Islam, or other world religions. There are no mosques or synagogues in the principality. No missionaries operate in the principality.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions. Roman Catholicism is the state religion. Most citizens adhere to Roman Catholicism. The Catholic ritual generally plays an important role in state festivities, such as the annual national day celebration. The Constitution provides the nearly 25,000 noncitizens who live in the principality with the same religious freedom as the approximately 6,000 citizens.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

No missionaries operate in the principality and proselytizing is strongly discouraged. However, there is no law against proselytizing by religious organizations that are formally registered by the Ministry of State. Organizations regarded as religious "sects" routinely have been denied such registration in the past. There were no reports of religious organizations being denied registration during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. There are no known ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different religions. There were no reports of societal religious violence in the principality.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 16,485 square miles and its population is approximately 16 million. Approximately 30 percent of the population consider themselves to be Roman Catholic, 15 percent Dutch Reformed, 7 percent Calvinist Reformist, 8 percent non-Christian (Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, or Buddhist), and 40 percent atheist or agnostic.

Dutch society has become increasingly secular. According to the Government's Social Cultural Planning Bureau, church membership has declined steadily from 76 percent in 1958 to 41 percent in 1995 and still is decreasing, although at a slower pace. The breakdown within this 41 percent is 20 percent Roman Catholic, 9 percent Dutch Reformed, 6 percent Calvinist Reformist, 2 percent Muslim, and 4 percent other. Membership is decreasing among all denominations, except Islam, which is expected to become the second largest religion in the country by 2010.

About 26 percent of church members are active within their religious communities. In 1999, 14 percent of Roman Catholics, 30 percent of Dutch Reformed, and 51 percent of Calvinist Reformed attended church at least once every 2 weeks.

Those who leave a church rarely return. Nonetheless, significant numbers of those who have left their churches still consider themselves to be members of a religious group. Approximately 60 percent of citizens claim adherence to a religion. However, the beliefs and practices of many of these adherents have developed into what some describe as a selective approach to religion: Accepting the positive but not the negative aspects of a particular religion. About 20 percent of citizens, primarily among those who have left the "traditional" churches, describe themselves as "seekers of spiritual or philosophical truths." These persons tend to gravitate toward (although not necessarily join) newer or non-orthodox religious movements, such as Pentecostal groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, Theosophy, or Anthroposophy.

In the wake of secularization since the 1960's, many Roman Catholics left the Church. Among those remaining, many express alienation from their religious hierarchy and doctrine. For example, most Dutch Catholics express no objections to female or married priests and differ with church thinking on a number of sensitive doctrinal issues.

Dutch Protestantism is quite heterogeneous. Among the Protestant churches, the Dutch Reformed Church remains the largest, although it is also the one that has suffered the greatest losses to secularization. Church membership in this denomination has declined by two-thirds in the past 50 years. The second largest Protestant group, the Calvinist Reformist Church, has been less affected by membership losses and even has succeeded in attracting former members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Other Protestant denominations include Baptists, Lutherans, and Remonstrants.

The country has a long tradition of providing shelter to non-Christian religions. Jews have been in the Netherlands since the late sixteenth century. By the beginning of World War II, the Netherlands counted 125,000 Jews, half of whom lived in Amsterdam. About 110,000 were killed by the Nazi regime. Following the war, more than 10,000 citizens emigrated to Israel. The current Jewish community includes fewer than 20,000 members but is thriving and operates its own schools.

Only 49 Muslims lived in the country in 1879. After 1960 the number of Muslims began to rise due to the arrival of migrant workers, primarily from Morocco and

Turkey. Family unification increased their numbers to 234,000 Moroccans and 279,000 Turks by 1998. Additional Muslims came from the former Dutch colony of Suriname. In the past decade, Muslim numbers further increased due to the large numbers of asylum seekers from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia. By 1998 about 700,000 persons, or 4.4 percent of the population, were Muslim—the majority Sunni.

A network of mosques and cultural centers serves the Islamic community. They are organized to conform to the country's system of subsidies, which underwrites cultural activities geared to social orientation and the promotion of equal opportunities. The number of mosques has grown to over 300. The increased influence of Islam also is reflected in the founding of over 30 Islamic schools, which is facilitated by legislation that recognizes and provides equal funding to schools representing different religious or philosophical backgrounds.

There were no reports of foreign missionary groups operating in the country.

SECTION II. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution permits the Government to place restrictions on the exercise of religion only on limited grounds, such as health hazards, traffic safety, and risk of public disorder.

The Calvinist Reformed Church enjoyed a privileged status until 1795. It received government subsidies and only church members could hold public office. Church and State have been separate since 1798. However, the Government provides state subsidies to religious organizations that maintain educational facilities. The Government provides funding to public as well as to religious schools, other religious educational institutions, and religious health care facilities, irrespective of their religious affiliation. In order to qualify for funding, institutions must meet strict non-religious-based criteria for curriculum standards, minimum size, and health care.

The law provides for minority views to be heard on radio and television. Thus, broadcasting time has been allotted to the Islamic Broadcasting Foundation, an alliance of all Muslim groups in the country.

The Government of Turkey exercises influence within the Dutch-Turkish Islamic community through its religious affairs directorate, the Diyanet, which is permitted to appoint imams for the 140 Turkish mosques in the Netherlands. There is no such arrangement with the Moroccan Government that allows it to appoint religious officials to Moroccan mosques. The Moroccan Government tries to exercise influence over the approximately 100 Moroccan mosques through a federation of Moroccan friendship societies. Dutch authorities have not been pleased with Turkish and Moroccan interference with religious and political affairs because it appears to run counter to government efforts to encourage integration of Muslims into Dutch society. For example, government authorities insist on strict observance of mandatory school attendance up to the age of 16. They disapprove of appeals by foreign imams to keep sexually mature girls under the age of 16 at home. To counter such influence the authorities have proposed training imams in the Netherlands itself, a measure that is opposed within the Islamic communities.

A sizable community of approximately 90,000 Hindus has arrived from the former Dutch colony of Suriname. The Netherlands also hosts smaller groups of Hindus who came from India and Uganda, as well as similar movements based on Hindu teachings as Ramakrishna, Hare Krishna, Sai Baba, and Osho. The Buddhist community is quite small, with about 17,000 members.

Disputes have arisen when the exercise of the rights to freedom of religion and speech clashed with the strictly enforced ban on discrimination. Such disputes are addressed either in the courts or by antidiscrimination boards. Complaints have repeatedly been filed against religious or political spokesmen who publicly condemned homosexuality. However, it is longstanding jurisprudence that such statements made on religious grounds do not constitute a criminal offense if the intention to offend or discriminate against homosexuals was deemed absent.

The headscarf issue has also been addressed repeatedly in the courts and by equal opportunities committees. The prevailing opinion is that the wearing of headscarves may only be banned on narrow grounds, such as security considerations or inconsistency with an official government uniform.

In other areas, employers have been rebuked publicly by anti-discrimination boards for failure to allow non-Christians to take leave from work on their religious holidays, for objecting to Sikhs wearing turbans or to Muslim women wearing

headscarves, or to observance of food requirements on religious grounds. The Equal Opportunities Committee in July 1999 ruled against a company that had denied employment to a Turkish applicant because he intended to attend Friday service at a mosque. This was considered a violation of freedom of religion. According to the Committee, Friday service for Muslims is equivalent to Sunday service for Christians. It ruled that employers are obliged to take account of reasonable religious demands from their employees, except in exceptional circumstances.

The Calvinist Reformist Social Union (RMU) charged that the 1996 law on working hours contributed to discrimination. This law permits work on Sunday under certain circumstances. Based on a survey of 2,000 companies, the RMU reported that job applicants increasingly are turned down if they refuse for religious reasons to work on Sunday. The larger labor federations reacted by calling for agreements between labor and management on the practice of religion during working hours. This matter usually does not lead to problems; however, if problems arise, the federations made clear their intention to call upon offending employers to observe this fundamental right. At the end of the reporting period, the legislature was still working on an amendment to the laws on working hours and business hours to permit employees to claim time off for the practice of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 ATTITUDES

Religious communities live alongside each other in harmony. The main Christian denominations participate in the National Council of Churches and have adopted an ecumenical approach to interfaith relations. The Council regularly presents common positions of the churches on matters of faith, church, and society. Protestant denominations in particular are significant promoters of Israel and the Jewish cause. Protestant churches also reach out to the Islamic community. Incidents of anti-Semitism are rare; however, there were a number of complaints about anti-Semitism on Internet sites set up by Dutch citizens. In 1999 the Discrimination on the Internet Registration Center recorded 181 complaints about discriminatory statements, racial discrimination, or anti-Semitism on the Internet. Most statements were removed voluntarily by the authors at the Center's request. Two complaints were forwarded to the Public Prosecutor when the authors refused to remove the controversial texts from the Internet. One case led to a conviction for incitement to hatred and discrimination.

Non-Europeans, such as Turks, Moroccans, or refugees from Iran and Iraq are occasional victims of discrimination, but primarily on racial or ethnic grounds and not because they are Muslims.

Examples of religious discrimination incidents are primarily of an anti-Semitic nature and involve use of swastikas, distributing neo-Nazi propaganda, and making the Hitler salute. The Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) saw proof of a trend of growing anti-Semitism in the country. In its annual report for the year 2000, CIDI reported that Jewish cemeteries, monuments, synagogues, and buildings were on 50 occasions the target of vandals. That is four times as often as in 1999. The number of incidents of physical or verbal intimidation of Jews also sharply increased, as did the painting of anti-Semitic slogans on walls. CIDI deputy director Hirschfeld warned against "a process of inurement" in the country, in which no one is shocked by more anti-Semitic slogans. "I am not saying that the Netherlands is anti-Semitic, but a climate could come about in which anti-Semitism may thrive." Not only right-wing extremists but also resident Muslims appear to be linked to the increase in anti-Semitic incidents. The renewed intensity of the intifada is also believed to be at least indirectly tied to this uptrend in anti-Semitism. Ethnic Moroccans were involved in 13 major incidents of anti-Semitism in 2000.

The labor federations have been working to include in collective bargaining agreements stipulations that permit non-Christian employees to take leave on non-Christian religious holidays. Such stipulations have now been included in most agreements.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Promoting religious freedom around the world is a high priority goal of Dutch foreign policy. The U.S. Embassy works very closely with the Government to promote religious freedom.

NORWAY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is the state church, enjoys some benefits not available to other faiths. In addition, Muslims encountered some difficulties in obtaining local permission to build mosques.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 150,000 square miles and its population is approximately 4.5 million. Citizens are considered to be members of the state church unless they explicitly associate themselves with another denomination; 93 percent of the population nominally belong to the state church. However, actual church attendance is considered to be rather low. Other denominations operate freely.

In 2000, 254,854 persons were registered in religious communities outside the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway. An additional 31,757 persons belong to un-registered communities.

The major registered religions and religious groups are: Islam (49,633 members); Pentecostal congregations (45,006 members); Roman Catholic Church (42,598 members); Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (21,163 members); Jehovah's Witnesses (15,055 members); Methodist Church of Norway (13,130 members); Norwegian Baptist Union (10,352 members); Church of Norway Mission Covenants (8,309 members); and the Buddhist Federation (7,031 members). Other groups include Orthodox Jews, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, and Hindus. In addition, there is one main organization for the nonreligious or atheists, which is the Norwegian Humanist Association. The Association has 67,950 registered adult members and 10,000 to 12,000 children as associate members. Persons cannot register as full members until they reach early adulthood.

Members of registered religious communities outside the state church are concentrated in the Oslo region and the west coast region of the country. The Hordaland, Rogaland, and Vest Agder districts have the highest number of members of religious communities outside the state church. The majority of European and American immigrants are either Christians or nonreligious, the exception being Muslim refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo. Most non-European immigrants practice Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism.

Foreign missionaries and other religious workers operate freely in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway is the state Church. It is supported financially by the State, and there is a constitutional requirement that the King and one-half of the Cabinet belong to this church. The relationship between the Church and the State regularly generates discussion. Church officials have spoken in favor of a greater separation in the state-church relationship. However, there were no significant developments in this debate during the period covered by this report.

A religious community is required to register with the Government only if it desires state support, which is provided to all registered denominations on a proportional basis in accordance with membership.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding by providing funding to the Cooperation Council for Faith and Secular Society (see Section III). In the past, the Government has provided funds for the operation of the office of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Intolerance. As of 2000, these specially earmarked funds no longer have been granted; however, the Government continues to support the office through its overall funding to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR).

Foreign religious workers from countries whose citizens Norway requires visas need to obtain such visas before entering the country. In addition, all foreign religious workers from countries outside the European Union or European Economic Area must apply for work permits. There is no government registration of foreign religious workers beyond the regularly established database of issued work permits.

In October 1995, the Storting (Parliament) passed a law introducing the subject "Religious Knowledge and Education in Ethics" in the school system. The legality of imposing compulsory teaching of Christianity and Christian ethics in public schools has been contested in court by both the Norwegian Humanist Association and the Moslem Council. These cases have been appealed to the Supreme Court after lower level courts ruled in favor of the State. The Supreme Court is expected to issue its ruling in August 2001. Currently, the law has been implemented in all public schools. On special grounds students may be exempted from participating in or performing specific religious acts such as church services or prayer, but may not forgo instruction in the subject as a whole. Students and workers who belong to minority denominations are allowed leave for the celebration of their religious holidays.

In July 1998, the Government suspended two priests in the Church of Norway and asked the courts for approval to terminate legally their priesthood due to insubordination and disloyalty. The conservative priests, serving in a rural community, openly had refused to accept religious and spiritual guidance from their liberal bishop based in the provincial capital. The parties were in disagreement on a number of social issues (such as gay rights). In January 2000, the Alta county court ruled that the two local priests could not be fired due to insubordination and disloyalty. The Minister of Church Affairs appealed the decision to the Haalogaland district court. The Haalogaland District Court ruled against the two priests. One of the priests accepted the ruling, and has now left his position. The other priest appealed his case to the Supreme Court. The appeals selection committee of the Supreme Court has not yet decided whether the Supreme Court will hear the case.

Norwegian Muslims encountered some difficulties in obtaining local permission to build mosques in areas where they are concentrated. Since 1975 the town council in Drammen has regularly turned down applications to build a mosque.

The Workers' Protection and Working Environment Act permits prospective employers to ask job applicants for positions in private or religious schools, or in day care centers, whether they agree to teach and behave in accordance with the institutions or religion's beliefs and principles.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

A Cooperation Council for Faith and Secular Society was established in 1996 and consists of the state church and other religious communities, including the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and secular humanist communities. At a 1998 conference, the Oslo Coalition for Freedom of Religious Beliefs was formed in order to facilitate closer coordination and international cooperation.

The Ecumenical Council of Christian Communities has been active in promoting cooperation within the Christian community. There also has been cooperation between the various religious communities on human rights issues in recent years. Bilateral dialog between the state Church and the Muslim and Jewish communities has generated statements in support of minority rights and human rights.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, particularly during the annual meeting of the UNCHR, in the overall context of the

promotion of human rights. Requests to the Embassy from official and nonofficial Norwegians for materials on religious freedom issues increased during the period covered by this report, which is a sign of growing interest in such issues as religious persecution, the church-state relationship, and the balance between freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

POLAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, sporadic incidents of harassment and violence against Jews and occasional desecration of Jewish and, more frequently, Catholic cemeteries continued, mostly by skinheads and other marginal elements of society.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy and Consulate General Krakow officers actively monitor threats to religious freedom and seek to further resolution of unsettled legacies of the Holocaust and the Communist era.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 120,725 square miles, and its population is an estimated 39 million. More than 96 percent of citizens are Roman Catholic, but Eastern Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and much smaller Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim congregations meet freely.

According to the Annual Statistical Gazette of Poland, the following figures represent the formal membership of the listed religious groups, but not the number of actual persons (e.g., the actual number of Jews in the country is estimated at between 10,000 and 30,000). There are an estimated 34,603,600 baptized Roman Catholics in the country; 561,400 Orthodox Church members; 123,052 Jehovah's Witnesses; 110,380 Uniates; 87,300 Lutherans (Augsburg); 25,549 Old Catholic Mariavits; 22,088 members of the Polish-Catholic Church; 19,410 Pentecostals; 9,303 Seventh-Day Adventists; 4,238 Baptists; 5,433 members of the New Apostolic Church; 5,123 members of the Muslim Religious Union; 5,043 Hare Krishna; 4,359 Methodists; 3,943 members of the Church of Christ; 3,610 Lutherans (Reformed); 2,738 Catholic Mariavits; 1,222 members of the Union of Jewish Communities; 951 members of the Eastern Old Ceremonial Church; and 150 members of the Karaims Religious Union. All of these religious groups have a relationship with the State governed by either legislation or treaty, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Uniate Church, the New Apostolic Church, the Church of Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna), and the Church of Christ.

According to a 2001 poll, some 58 percent of citizens actively participate in religious ceremonies at least once per week; a 1999 poll found that 8 percent declared that they have no contact with the Catholic Church. An estimated 32 percent declared they attend church irregularly or sporadically. An estimated 3 percent declared themselves to be nonbelievers. The survey found women to be more religious than men, with 64 percent of the former attending church regularly, compared with 51 percent of the latter. Farmers are the most religious occupational group, with 68 percent attending church regularly. No figures are available on the number of atheists in the country.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely in the country and are subject only to the standard rules applicable to foreigners temporarily in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There are 15 religious groups in the country whose relationship with the State is governed by specific legislation and 141 other religious communities. The legisla-

tion outlines the internal structure of the religious groups, their activities, and procedures for property restitution.

Religious communities may register with the Government, but they are not required to do so and may function freely without registration. According to regulations effective as of June 1998, registration requires that the group have submitted the names of at least 100 members as well as information regarding the group itself. This information on membership (i.e., signatures) must be confirmed by a notary public, although the registration itself often appears to be a formality. Two new religious communities registered during the period covered by this report, the Independent Hebrew Religious Community in Poznan and the Church of the Mercy of Jesus. All churches and recognized religious groups share the same privileges (duty-free importation of office equipment, reduced taxes, etc.).

Citizens enjoy the freedom to practice any faith that they choose. Religious groups may organize, select, and train personnel, solicit and receive contributions, publish, and meet without government interference. There are no government restrictions on establishing and maintaining places of worship.

The law places Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities on the same legal footing, and the Government attempts to address the problems that minority religious groups may face.

Although the Constitution gives parents the right to bring up their children in compliance with their own religious and philosophical beliefs, religious education classes continue to be taught in the public schools at public expense. While children are supposed to have the choice between religious instruction and ethics, the Ombudsman's office states that in most schools ethics courses are not offered due to financial constraints. Although Catholic Church representatives teach the vast majority of religious classes in the schools, parents can request religious classes in any of the religions legally registered, including Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish religious instruction. Such non-Catholic religious instruction exists in practice, although it is not common, and the Ministry of Education pays the instructors. Priests and other instructors receive salaries from the State for teaching religion in public schools, and Catholic Church representatives are included on a commission that determines whether books qualify for school use.

In January 1998, the Parliament ratified the Concordat, a treaty regulating relations between the Government and the Vatican, which was signed in 1993. The vote came after years of bitter disputes between Concordat supporters and opponents over whether the treaty simply provides the Catholic Church's rights or blurs the line between church and state. Subsequently signed by the President, the Concordat took effect in April 1998.

The Government continues to work with both local and international religious groups to address property claims and other sensitive issues stemming from Nazi- and Communist-era confiscations and persecutions. The Government enjoys good relations with international Jewish groups. The Government cooperates effectively with a variety of international organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, for the preservation of historic sites including cemeteries and houses of worship.

Progress continues in implementing the laws that permit local religious communities to submit claims for property owned prior to World War II that subsequently was nationalized. A 1997 law permits the local Jewish community to submit claims for such property, which mirrored legislation benefiting other religious communities. The laws allow for the return of churches and synagogues, cemeteries, and community headquarters, as well as buildings that were used for other religious, educational, or charitable activities. The laws included time limits for filing claims; in several cases the deadlines have expired, and no additional claims may be filed. However, restitution commissions (composed of representatives of the Government and the religious community) are continuing adjudication of previously filed claims.

The time limit for applications by the Catholic Church expired in December 1991. As of the summer of 2001, 2,572 of the 3,041 claims filed by the Church had been concluded, with 1,219 claims settled by agreement between the Church and the party in possession of the property (usually the national or a local government), 866 properties were returned through decision of the Commission on Property Restitution, which rules on disputed claims, 471 claims were rejected, and 16 cases were likely to go to court. Claims by the local Jewish community (whose deadline for filing claims under the 1997 law expires in May 2002) are being filed slowly, in part because ongoing disputes between the local Jewish community and representatives of international Jewish organizations have prevented reaching an accord between the two groups that could provide needed resources to the local community. By the summer of 2001, 659 claims had been filed. Of the 659 claims, the Commission on Property Restitution considered and closed 162 cases; 84 of the 162 cases were

closed by an agreement between the parties. As of early 2001, Lutheran claims for 1,200 properties had resulted in 505 cases being closed with the return of the properties in question (the deadline for filing such claims was July 1996).

However, the laws on religious communal property do not address the private property of any group. In February 2001, the Parliament passed a reprivatization law that included controversial provisions requiring claimants to have held Polish citizenship as of December 1999. President Aleksander Kwasniewski vetoed the bill in March 2001, citing the likely cost of the proposed bill, as well as the need for any reprivatization law to be inclusive and eschew citizenship requirements. Claims continue to be filed and property returned throughout the country through an ad hoc process of local court rulings and private arrangements among contending parties.

The laws on communal property restitution also do not address the issue of communal properties to which third parties now have title, leaving several controversial and complicated cases unresolved. In a number of cases over several years, buildings and residences were built on land that included Jewish cemeteries that were destroyed during or after World War II. For example, a school for disabled children now stands on the site of a completely destroyed Jewish cemetery in Kalisz. The existence of the school complicated the issue of returning the cemetery to the Jewish community. Efforts continued during the period covered by this report to reach a resolution acceptable to all concerned.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. However, the Government established in March 2001 a department within the Ministry of Interior to monitor the activities of "new religious groups" and "cults." As of June 30, 2001 the new department had not become active.

Although the Constitution provides for the separation of church and state, crucifixes hang in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament, as well as in many government offices. In June 1998, a provincial court decided that a crucifix hung in the meeting room of the Lodz city council in 1990 could remain, denying the complaint of a city resident. An atheist complained that the crucifix threatened religious freedom and discriminated against him.

State-run radio broadcasts Catholic Mass on Sundays, and the Catholic Church is authorized to relicense radio and television stations to operate on frequencies assigned to the Church, the only body outside the National Radio and Television Broadcasting Council allowed to do so.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to religious freedom; however, sporadic incidents of harassment and violence against Jews and occasional desecration of Jewish and, more often, Catholic cemeteries continued, mostly generated by skinheads and other marginal elements of society.

During the period covered by this report, Polish-Jewish relations were complicated by a controversy that arose over revelations regarding the 1941 massacre of the Jewish population of the northeastern town of Jedwabne. The publication of a book that alleged that the killings were perpetrated by the town's ethnic Polish inhabitants, and not by the occupying Germans as stated in a monument at the site, led to considerable discussion of the Polish role during the Nazi occupation, of the extent of Jewish collaboration with the former Soviet Union, and of Polish-Jewish relations in general. The Government moved quickly to address the problem, removed the inaccurate monument, began an investigation of the Jedwabne events, and prepared to hold a ceremony of reconciliation on the 60th anniversary of the killings in July 2001.

Anti-Semitic feelings persist among certain sectors of the population, occasionally manifesting themselves in acts of vandalism and physical or verbal abuse. However, surveys in recent years show a continuing decline in anti-Semitic sentiment and awedly anti-Semitic candidates won few elections.

Sporadic and isolated incidents of harassment and violence against Jews continue to occur in the country, often generated by skinheads and other marginal societal groups. Occasional cases of cemetery desecration, including both Jewish and, more frequently, Catholic shrines, also occurred during the period covered by this report.

Government authorities consistently criticized such actions and pledged to prevent similar acts in the future, for example, by increased police patrols around Jewish sites.

In September 2000, dignitaries from Poland, Israel, the United States, and other countries (including Prince Hassan of Jordan) gathered in Oswiecim (Auschwitz) to commemorate the opening of the refurbished Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot synagogue and the Auschwitz Jewish Center. The synagogue, the sole synagogue in Oswiecim to survive World War II and an adjacent Jewish cultural and educational center, provide visitors a place to pray and to learn about the active pre-World War II Jewish community that existed in Oswiecim. The synagogue was the first communal property in the country to be returned to the Jewish community under the 1997 law allowing for restitution of Jewish communal property.

In October 2000, extreme nationalist Kazimierz Switon, who during the period 1998 to 1999 was responsible for the controversial raising of several hundred protest crosses at a gravel pit outside the former Auschwitz death camp, was acquitted of distributing leaflets alleging that some politicians were of Jewish origins and appealing for their removal from public life. The court ruled that the 1995 distribution of such leaflets did not incite ethnic strife.

In November 2000, under the auspices of the No to Europe Association (an anti-European Union organization), some 400 nationalists marched through the streets of Katowice, chanting anti-Semitic slogans and burning Israeli flags. The protest organizer told police investigating the case that only some 30 percent of the rally's participants were members of his organization.

In February 2001, 16 tombstones were desecrated in the Jewish cemetery in Wroclaw and, in April 2001, several tombstones were damaged in a Catholic cemetery in the town of Bartoszyce. Also in April, three other Catholic cemeteries were desecrated: Several hundred crosses and crucifixes were stolen from a Catholic cemetery in the Silesian town of Olawa, apparently in an attempt to steal and sell metal crosses; 60 tombstones were damaged in Markowice (southeastern Poland); and 57 tombstones were damaged in the central town of Siepc. Also in April 2001, 49 graves were damaged in the Pomeranian town of Bytow, allegedly by unemployed persons seeking to sell decorative metal features for scrap. In May 2001, the Jewish cemetery in Oswiecim was desecrated when 39 tombstones were knocked over by unidentified perpetrators. Later that month, a group of international and Polish students, who participated in the March of Remembrance and Hope, organized a clean up of the cemetery and restored the tombstones to their proper locations.

In March 2001, several thousand students, journalists, and politicians removed vulgar and racist slogans from walls in the central city of Lodz; they also were removed in 2000.

In March and April of 2001, several functionaries in the presidential chancellery were identified as having participated as students in the government-sponsored anti-Semitic campaigns of 1968. One of those accused subsequently resigned.

In April 2001, controversial Gdansk priest Henryk Jankowski created in his church a replica of the barn in Jedwabne in which members of that town's Jewish community were burned to death in 1941. A sign near the display accused Jews of having killed Christ and of persecuting Poles. The local archbishop ordered the tableau removed, and religious and political leaders strongly criticized its construction in the church.

In April 2001, during the 13th March of the Living from Auschwitz to Birkenau to honor victims of the Holocaust, several hundred citizens joined 2,000 marchers from Israel and other countries. Government officials participating in the march included Members of Parliament, the province's governor, and Oswiecim's mayor and city council chairman. Schoolchildren, boy scouts, the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society, and the Jewish Students Association in Poland also participated in the march. In May 2001, several hundred students from around the world marched through the town in The March of Remembrance and Hope.

The Jewish community faced a continuing battle, which began in April 1999, between Gdansk's local Jewish community and the leadership of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland (ZGZ), involving accusations of mismanagement of community funds.

There is some public concern about the growth of groups perceived to be "sects" and the influence of nonmainstream religious groups, especially in the wake of press reports of the deaths of a few young persons in circumstances suggesting cult activity. For example, besides the annual report by the interministerial group for new religious movements on the activities of groups it considers to be "sects," informational training on such groups has been given to officials at the county level. Articles have appeared in the press and on the Internet reporting the involvement of "sects" in disappearances, such as the group Antrovis that teaches that

extraterrestrials will evacuate its members from a meeting site on a southern Polish mountain in advance the impending destruction of the world. In Szczecin law enforcement authorities have linked Antrovis to the death of a man found floating in the Oder River.

Interfaith groups work to bring together the various religious groups in the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Representatives of the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General Krakow continue to monitor closely issues relating to religious freedom and interfaith relations; for example, one officer devotes the vast majority of his time to questions of Polish and Jewish relations. Embassy and consulate officers meet frequently with representatives of religious communities, the Government, and local authorities on such matters as property restitution, skinhead harassment, and interfaith cooperation.

Embassy and consulate officers actively monitor threats to religious freedom. On a regular basis, embassy and consulate officials discuss issues of religious freedom, including property restitution, with a wide range of government officials at all levels. The Embassy and Consulate General work as well to facilitate the protection and return of former Jewish cemeteries throughout the country. The Embassy and the Consulate General also play a continuing role in ongoing efforts to establish an international foundation to oversee restitution of Jewish communal property. A U.S. Government mediator worked with the two sides (the Polish Union of Jewish Religious Communities and the World Jewish Restitution Organization) to resolve outstanding differences that have delayed establishment of such a foundation. In June 2000, the sides reached agreement. The agreement subsequently collapsed, although efforts are continuing to come to an accommodation, and the local Jewish community is continuing to file claims for the return of communal property.

Embassy and consulate representatives, including the Ambassador, also meet regularly with representatives of major religious communities in the country. The Ambassador holds regular consultations with Primate Glemp and meets with religious leaders, including leaders of the Jewish community, both in the capital and during his travels throughout the country.

The public affairs sections of the Embassy and the Consulate in Krakow provided continuing support for activities designed to promote cultural and religious tolerance. Such activities included providing a Democracy Commission grant to the Union of Jewish Religious Communities for use in building a database of claimable Jewish communal property; sponsoring a speaking tour by a visiting U.S. professor to lecture on tolerance; and continuing press and public affairs support for the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation's education project in Oswiecim.

PORTUGAL

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

There was an improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In April 2001, the Portuguese Parliament passed the Religious Freedom Act, which provides recognized religions with benefits previously reserved for the Catholic Church. The bill exempts the Catholic Church, which maintains a special status under a (revised) 1940 "Concordata" between the Government and the Vatican. The Concordata itself is coming up for amendment in order to be consistent with the new Religious Freedom Act, a process that is expected to be completed by 2003. However, the benefits of this Act will be extended only to religious groups that have been established in the country for 30 years or recognized internationally for at least 60 years.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 35,672 square miles and the population is an estimated 10 million. More than 80 percent of the population above the age of 12 identify with the Roman Catholic Church, yet a large percentage state that they do not actively participate in church activities. About 4 percent identify with various

Protestant denominations (including about 250,000 Evangelists) and about 1 percent with non-Christian religions. Less than 3 percent state that they have no religion.

Non-Christian religions include about 35,000 Muslims (largely from Portuguese Africa, ethnically sub-Saharan African or South Asian), approximately 700 Jews, and very small number of Buddhists, Taoists, and Zoroastrians. There is also a Hindu community of about 7,000 persons, which largely traces its origins to South Asians who emigrated from Portuguese Africa and the former Portuguese colony of Goa in India. Many of these minority communities are not organized formally.

Brazilian syncretistic Catholic Churches, which combine Catholic ritual with pre-Christian Afro-Brazilian ritual, such as Candomble and Umbanda, also operate in small numbers, as do the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Orthodox Christians. The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), a proselytizing church that originated in Brazil, also exists. The Church of Scientology has approximately 200 active members, primarily in the Lisbon area.

Foreign missionary groups (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) operate freely.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Portugal is a secular state. Other than the Constitution, the two most important documents relating to religious freedom are the 2001 Religious Freedom Act and the 1940 Concordata (as amended in 1971) between Portugal and the Holy See.

In 2001 the country took a step toward ensuring religious freedom to a population that has become more diverse in recent years. In April 2001, the Parliament passed the Religious Freedom Act. This law does not apply to the Catholic Church, which maintains a separate agreement with Portugal under the terms of the Concordata. In order to comply constitutionally with the Religious Freedom Act, the Government has begun negotiations with the Vatican to once again amend the Concordata. This process should be complete by 2003. In the interim, the current Concordata remains in force.

The Religious Freedom Act creates a legislative framework for religions established in the country for at least 30 years, or those recognized internationally for at least 60 years. The Act provides qualifying religions with benefits previously reserved for the Catholic Church: full tax-exempt status, legal recognition for marriage and other rites, chaplain visits to prisons and hospitals, and respect for traditional holidays. It allows for each religion to negotiate—but with no guarantee of acceptance—it's own Concordata-style agreement with the Government.

The Act also establishes an independent consultative commission within the Justice Ministry that will oversee the application of the Act. However, some religions resent the fact that the Catholic Church, although exempt from the Act, will have membership on the Commission. Chief chaplaincies for the military, prisons, and hospitals remain state-funded positions for Roman Catholics only.

The Government takes active steps to promote interfaith understanding. Most notably 5 days a week the state television channel (Radiotelevisao Portuguesa 2) broadcasts "A Fe dos Homens"—"The Faith of Man"—a half-hour program consisting of various segments written and produced by different religious communities. The Government pays for the segments and professional production companies are hired under contract to produce the segments. The concept behind "The Faith of Man" originated in 1984, when minority religious communities began to request broadcast time on Radiotelevisao Portuguesa (RTP) television. In 1997 arrangements for such broadcasts were regularized and formalized and the program was initiated. Religious communities send delegates to a special television commission, which determines the scheduling of segments. The television commission has operated on the general rule that religious communities eligible for the program are those that have been operating for at least 30 years in the country or at least 60 years in their country of origin.

The Catholic Church owns a radio station called Radio Renascenca (Radio Renaissance), which has one of the country's highest market shares, yet less than 10 percent of its programs have religious content. The Diocese of Leiria-Fatima is seeking funding to establish a cable television station.

Public secondary school curriculums include an optional course called "religion and morals." This course functions as a survey of world religions and is taught by

a lay person. It can be used to give instruction on the Catholic religion; however, the Catholic Church must approve all teachers for this course. Other religions may set up such a course if they have 10 or more children in the particular school. There are about 100 such non-Catholic programs in the country. Under the new Act, each religion may approve the course's respective instructor. The Catholic Church states that it would prefer this course to be obligatory.

Under the Concordata, major Catholic holidays also are official holidays. Seven of the country's 16 national holidays are Catholic holidays. These 7 holidays do not negatively impact other religious groups. The Papal Nuncio is always the dean of the diplomatic corps.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. However, the Church of Scientology, although recognized as a religious association since 1986, does not benefit from the Religious Freedom Act, as it has not been established in the country for 30 years or recognized internationally for 60 years, as required under the law. The Church's leaders claim that they suffer no discrimination or opposition in the country. However, they are concerned that exclusion from the benefits accorded under the Act will have a negative impact on their ability to practice their faith.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The passage of the Religious Freedom Act and a variety of activities in different parts of the country indicate that there is a growing recognition of the need to reach out to minority religions.

In September 2000, Lisbon City Hall sponsored a 3-day conference entitled "Oceans of Peace: Dialogs between Religions and Cultures," whose goal was to promote mutual understanding and communication among religions. In addition to carrying through with the plan to illuminate Lisbon's mosque and rename its street "Rua da Mesquita"—Mosque Street—Lisbon City Hall has provided matching funds for completion of the mosque. The municipality also is providing matching funds for the restoration of Lisbon's 19th century synagogue, considered a building of historic significance.

In February 2001, Belmonte, an isolated town in northeastern Portugal, dedicated its first Jewish cemetery in 500 years. The town's Jewish community practiced its faith in secret, from the time of the Inquisition until 1981. Although the 200-member Jewish community makes up only 5 percent of the city's population, Belmonte City Hall contributed to the cemetery's construction. The town plans to open a Jewish museum by 2002.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. Many communities conduct "open houses" or sponsor interfaith education seminars.

The residents of the Azores archipelago, although overall traditionally very Catholic, are also quite tolerant of other faiths. Both Mormon and Baptist missionaries are active on the islands. They are well treated and participate in Azorean social life.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

U.S. Embassy representatives have discussed issues and problems of religious freedom with government officials, members of the National Assembly, broadcasting executives, and leading religious figures. These contacts are ongoing.

ROMANIA

The Constitution provides for religious freedom; while the Government generally respects this right in practice, there are some restrictions and several minority reli-

gious groups continued to claim credibly that low-level government officials and the Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts at proselytizing, as well as interfered with other religious activities.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Government registration and recognition requirements still pose obstacles to minority religions. Following the accession to power of the left-center Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR) in December 2000, reorganization and staffing of the new Government put on hold many religious initiatives. While the new Government eased distinctions between types of places of worship that could be constructed by recognized and unrecognized religions, new requirements for construction of these churches may make the process more difficult for minority religions. Progress on restitution of properties slowed under the PDSR Government. In February 2001, the PSDR Government sent to the 15 recognized religions for comment a highly controversial draft bill on religious denominations, which the previous Government had withdrawn in February 2000 after strong objections by non-Orthodox religious groups and human rights groups. Most minority religious groups reiterated their critical views of the bill. The Government made little progress on restitution of religious properties and has made more cumbersome the process of obtaining permission to erect new churches for non-Orthodox religious denominations.

There are generally amicable relations among the different religious groups; however, the Romanian Orthodox Church has shown some hostility towards non-Orthodox religious churches, and criticized the "aggressive proselytizing" of Protestant, neo-Protestant, and other religious groups, which the Church has repeatedly described as "sects." Opposition by the Romanian Orthodox Church to the restitution of religious property to other religious groups, especially Greek Catholic churches, remains a problem.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy has met with the Government and religious leaders to encourage respect for religious freedom, pressed strongly against the proposal of the draft religion bill, and urged the restitution of religious property seized under the Communists.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of roughly 91,799 square miles and its population is approximately 22.4 million.

The Romanian Orthodox Church is the predominant religion in the country. The Government officially recognizes 15 religions: the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church, the Old Rite Christian Church, the Reformed (Protestant) Church, the Christian Evangelical Church, the Evangelical Augustinian Church, the Lutheran Evangelical Church-Synod Presbyterian, the Unitarian Church, the Baptist Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Armenian Church, the Mosaic denomination, and the Muslim denomination. However, members of other faiths worship freely. According to the 1992 census, the latest year for which official figures are available, the Romanian Orthodox Church had 19,802,389 members (86.8 percent of the population) including about 26,000 Serbs and 53,000 Ukrainians. The Roman Catholic Church had 1,161,942 members. The Catholic Church of Byzantine Rite (Greek Catholics or Uniates) had 223,327 members. This figure is disputed by the Greek Catholic Church, which claims that the census was taken in an atmosphere of intimidation that discouraged Greek Catholics from declaring themselves as such. The Greek Catholic Church estimated in 1999 that its adherents number close to 750,000 members. (Greek Catholics were former members of the Romanian Orthodox Church who accepted the four principles that were required for union with the Roman Catholic Church in 1697, but continue to observe Orthodox festivals and many Orthodox traditions). The Old Rite Christian Church had 28,141 members (of whom 3,711 are ethnic Romanians and 24,016 are ethnic Lippovans/Russians). The Protestant Reformed Church had 802,454 members (of whom 765,370 are ethnic Hungarians). The Christian Evangelical Church had 49,963 members. The Evangelical Augustinian Church had 39,119 members (including 3,660 Romanians and 27,313 ethnic Germans). The Lutheran Evangelical Church Synod-Presbyterian had 21,221 members (including 12,842 ethnic Hungarians). The Unitarian Church of Romania had 76,708 members. The Baptist Church had 109,462 members. The Apostolic Church of God (Pentecostal Church) had 220,824 members (400,000, according to the Pentecostals). The Seventh-Day Christian Adventist Church had 77,546 members. The Armenian Church had 2,023 members. There were 9,670 Jews, according to the 1992 census (the Jewish Community Federation states that there are about 12,000

members). Muslims numbered 55,928. According to the same census, the number of atheists was 10,331. There were 24,314 people who do not have any religious affiliation and 8,137 people who did not declare any religious affiliation.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, most religions have followers dispersed throughout the country, but a few religious communities are concentrated in particular regions. Old Rite members (Lippovans) are located in Moldavia and Dobrogea. Most Muslims are located in the southeastern part of the country in Dobrogea (near Bulgaria and the coast). Most Greek Catholics are in Transylvania but there are also Greek Catholics in Moldavia. Protestant and Catholic believers tend to be in Transylvania, but many also are located around Bacau. Orthodox or Greek Catholic ethnic Ukrainians are mostly in the northwestern part of the country. Orthodox ethnic Serbs are in Banat. Armenians are in Moldavia and the south.

According to published sources, the Baha'i Faith, the Family (God's Children), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Unification Church; the Methodist Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Presbyterian Church, Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, and Zen Buddhism are active denominations in the country.

According to a nationwide poll conducted in February 2001, 23 percent of those polled say that they go to church on a weekly basis; 24 percent claim to go several times per month; 29 percent attend services several times per year; 13 percent go only once a year or less; and 11 percent do not go to church at all. The same poll shows that 86 percent of citizens say that church is the institution they trust most.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, laws and decrees give the Government considerable potential control over religious life. Government registration and recognition requirements still pose obstacles to minority religions. Several minority religious groups continued to claim credibly that low-level government officials and the Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts at proselytizing, as well as interfered with other religious activities.

A Communist era decree, number 177 of 1948, remains the basic law governing religious denominations. It allows considerable state control over religious life. Technically, none of the articles of this law have been abrogated; however, according to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, a large number of its articles have been nullified in practice by the Constitution and a series of governmental decrees. Although several religious denominations and religious associations confirmed that articles stipulating the State's interference with or control over religious life and activities have not been enforced, such provisions still exist in the law.

The Government requires religious groups to register. To be recognized as a religion, religious groups must register with the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and present their statutes, organizational, leadership, and management diagrams, and the body of dogma and doctrines formally stated by a religion. The Government has refused to register a number of religious groups, and no religious group has received status as a religion since 1990. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations stated that this was due to provisions of Decree 177 of 1948, which stipulates the recognition of religious denominations by a decree issued by the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly, a Communist era institution that no longer exists. Since no new legislation has been passed in this regard, the State Secretariat stated that the registration of any new religion is not possible.

Under the provisions of Decree 177 of 1948, the Government recognized 14 religions. In addition to this, a December 1989 decree reestablished the Greek Catholic Church as a recognized religion, which had been forced to merge with the Romanian Orthodox Church by another Communist decree in 1948. Only the clergy of these 15 recognized religions are eligible to receive state support. Recognized religions have the right to establish schools, teach religion in public schools, receive funds to build churches, pay clergy salaries with state funds and subsidize clergy's housing expenses, broadcast religious programming on radio and television, apply for broadcasting licenses for denominational frequencies, and enjoy tax-exempt status.

The Government registers religious groups that it does not recognize either as religious and charitable foundations or as cultural associations. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported that it licensed 622 religious and charitable foundations, as well as cultural organizations, under Law 21 of 1924 on Juridical Entities, thereby entitling them to juridical status as well as to exemptions from income and customs taxes. According to Decree 177 of 1948 on Religion, in order to

be recognized as juridical entities, religious and charitable foundations must request and receive approval from the Government through the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations. After receiving the approval, such organizations have to apply for registration in local court, which has the final authority under the law to register religious organizations, but the courts usually defer to the opinion of the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations.

A government decree (26 of 2000) on associations and foundations became effective on May 1, 2000, abrogating Law 21 of 1924. The new law eliminates, at least in theory, the bureaucratic obstacles in the registration process, which religious groups repeatedly criticized as arbitrary and time-consuming. It also removes the minimum requirement of members needed to establish religious associations and foundations. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported in May 2001 that 50 new religious associations received approval for registration in 2000 and 3 associations were approved as of May 2001.

The number of adherents that each religion had in the 1992 census determines the proportion of the budget each recognized religion receives. The Romanian Orthodox religion, in accordance with its size as recorded in the 1992 census, receives the largest share of governmental financial support. In addition, Orthodox religious leaders generally preside over state occasions. In 2000 the Government allocated funds amounting to almost \$11 million (235 billion lei) to the Orthodox Church, approximately \$650,000 (14 billion lei) to the Roman Catholic Church, close to \$925,000 (over 20 billion lei) to the Greek Catholic Church, and about \$280,000 (6 billion lei) to the Reformed Church, for the construction and repair of churches.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, about 1,000 missionaries per year who enter the country as tourists can renew their residence permits without special formalities. They require only a formal letter of request from the religious group for which they work. This process reportedly became smoother and faster by the end of 1999, and continued to be satisfactory during the period covered by this report. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported that approximately 1,200 missionaries received visa extensions in 2000 and about 500 renewed their visas in the first half of 2001. Most religious groups state that they have not been faced with any problems other than minor delays in getting residence permit extensions for their missionaries.

The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations used to differentiate between missionaries of recognized religions, who received 1-year visa extensions, and those of unrecognized religions, who were granted only 6-month visa extensions, apparently due to an agreement between the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and the Interior Ministry. A new law on foreigners, 123 of April 2001, eliminates this distinction by providing only 6-month extensions for all categories. Religious groups expressed concern about this provision. According to the same law, there are penalties for any foreigner who stays without a visa, but such penalties do not appear to be linked to religious activities.

New regulations issued by the Government on May 22, 2001, for the organization and operation of the commission in charge of granting approvals for the construction of places of worship defines these as "buildings such as churches, houses of prayer, temples, mosques, synagogues, houses of assembly, etc., used by religious denominations, religious associations and foundations for their specific religious services." The new regulations therefore no longer differentiate between recognized religions and unrecognized religions in terms of what they are allowed to build as places of worship.

However, there are other provisions in these regulations that could make it more difficult for minority (non-Orthodox, whether recognized or unrecognized) religious groups to get such approvals. Approval is mandatory for obtaining a permit to build a church or other place of worship. The commission that approves such permits consists of 11 permanent members. Only the Orthodox Church has members on this commission. Two members are representatives of the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations; four represent the Ministry of Culture and Religious Denominations; and two represent the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Orthodox Theological Institute. The previous commission was composed of technical experts from the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and the Ministry of Public Works and Territorial Management, and did not include members of the Orthodox Church. In addition to the technical aspects of building a church, the new commission is entitled to decide on the "opportuneness" of building the place of worship, and whether the construction is in line with the specific dogma, doctrines, and statutes of the religion in question.

In February 2001, the new Government circulated for comment to the 15 recognized religions the text of a possible new draft bill on religious denominations. This bill was actually the same bill that had been submitted by the previous Government

to Parliament in September 1999. At that time it generated much criticism. Viewing it as undemocratic and restrictive of religious freedom, most religious denominations, religious and human rights groups, and foreign observers called for the draft law's withdrawal. If enacted the law effectively would have restricted freedom of religion, by imposing tough conditions on the registration of religious denominations and religious groups. It also would have required applicants to have a membership totaling $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 percent of the country's population (over 100,000 persons), and strengthened the powers of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations. The draft law would have declared the Romanian Orthodox Church to be the national church.

Following strong concerns raised by human rights and religious freedom groups as well foreign observers, in February 2000 the previous Government decided to withdraw the bill it had proposed in 1999. The new Government declared that this bill would be used only as a starting point in drafting a new one based on the proposals made by recognized religions. Unrecognized religions were not consulted on this issue. According to the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, the Government plans to amend the original bill based on the 15 religious denominations' opinions and then discuss it in a meeting with all the recognized religions. Government officials expect the bill to be submitted to Parliament in early 2002. Most minority religious groups reiterated their criticism of the religion bill.

Minority religious groups assert that they have found central government and parliamentary officials more cooperative than local officials. They specifically reported that relations with the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, which started to improve at the end of 1999, continued to improve until the end of the previous Government's term in office. Most minority religions expect to redevelop positive relations with officials of the new Government and the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations.

Until the elections of November 2000, the State Secretary for Religious Denominations reported directly to the Prime Minister. The new Government moved the Secretariat into the Ministry of Culture, with the State Secretary now reporting to the Culture Minister. Religious groups are concerned about the Government's decision to reestablish the position of local Inspector for Culture and Religious Denominations in the counties, a position reminiscent of the Communist period, when such inspectors used to monitor the activity of religious groups.

Following a Supreme Court ruling in July 1999, the Ministry of Education no longer requires Adventist students to come to school or take exams on Saturdays.

Between October 31 and November 2, 2000, the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations sponsored a meeting of the heads of the departments for religious affairs from the Balkan countries to exchange information about the developments in the religious life in these countries.

Christmas and the Orthodox Easter are national holidays, but this does not appear to affect any of the other religious groups. Members of the other recognized religions that celebrate Easter are entitled by law to have an additional holiday.

Religious leaders occasionally play a role in politics. In particular, many Orthodox leaders make public appearances alongside prominent political figures on various occasions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although protected by law, several minority religious groups, which include both recognized and unrecognized religions, made credible complaints that low-level government officials and Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts to proselytize, interfered in religious activities, and otherwise discriminated against them during the period covered by this report. The Government denied these allegations. In some instances, local police and administrative authorities tacitly supported, at times violent, societal campaigns against proselytizing (see Section III). There appears to be no clear understanding by the authorities of what activities constitute proselytizing.

The Government requires religious groups to register; representatives of religious groups that sought recognition after 1990 allege that the registration process was arbitrary and unduly influenced by the Romanian Orthodox Church, and that they did not receive clear instructions concerning the requirements. The Organization of the Orthodox Believers of Old Rite, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Adventist Movement for Reform, the Baha'i Faith, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) are some of the religious groups that have tried unsuccessfully to register as religions. The Baha'i Faith stated that it has never received any answer to its repeated requests to be registered as a religious denomination. Jehovah's Witnesses also complained that the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations consistently had refused to grant it status as a religion, despite a March 2000 Supreme Court ruling that recognized the modified statutes of Jehovah's Witnesses as a

Christian religious denomination. The court ruling asked the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations to issue an administrative document recognizing Jehovah's Witnesses, but the State Secretariat refused to do so. In response, Jehovah's Witnesses asked for damages in court and, consequently, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Denominations will have to pay a symbolic \$.02 (500 lei) per day fine to the State as of May 9, 2001.

The Government has not granted any religious group status as a religion since 1990. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations stated that this was due to provisions of Decree 177 of 1948, which stipulates the recognition of religious denominations by a decree issued by the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly, a Communist era institution that no longer exists. Since no new legislation has been passed in this regard, the State Secretariat stated that the registration of any new religion is not possible.

Several unrecognized religions have complained in the past that, in most cases, the courts did not accept their registration without approval of the State Secretary of Religious Denominations. These organizations receive no financial support from the State, other than limited tax and import duty exemptions, and are not permitted to engage in profit-making activities. Moreover, until May 2001, religious groups registered as foundations or charitable organizations were allowed to rent or build office space only; they were not permitted to build churches or other buildings designated as houses of worship. According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, such religious groups received building permits only for halls of prayer because the legislation in force made reference only to religions and did not include any provisions for religious associations. The differentiation between religions and religious associations with regard to the construction of places of worship appeared to be an arbitrary decision by the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations.

Representatives of minority religious groups dispute the 1992 census results and claimed that census takers in some cases simply assigned an affiliation without inquiring about religious affiliation. Moreover, representatives of several minority religious groups complain that off-budget funds are allocated in many cases in a biased manner, mostly favoring the Romanian Orthodox Church. For example, minority religious groups complained that Orthodox churches were built in areas without Orthodox believers. According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, off-budget funds are distributed depending on the needs of the various religious denominations.

The Government's approach to building places of worship by organized churches varied, depending upon whether the religious group was a recognized religion or not. Prior to the new regulations issued in May 2001, unrecognized religious groups received approvals only for "halls of prayer" and not for "places of worship." Several unrecognized religious groups have made credible allegations that their efforts to acquire property, including getting building permits and other documents, were delayed or impeded for lengthy periods of time by local officials. They claim that local Orthodox clergy encouraged these delays. The last State Secretary for Religious Denominations, Nicolae Branzea, who was in office between September 1999 and November 2000 under the former center-right coalition government, canceled an internal note issued by his predecessor which had asked local authorities to deny building licenses to religious associations and foundations. As a result, it was much easier to get licenses during the Branzea period, although some religious groups still complained of delays. According to a book published by Branzea, from September 1999 to October 2000 the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations granted 133 building licenses to the Orthodox Church, 22 to the Greek Catholic Church, 7 to the Roman Catholic Church, and 13 to the Pentecostal Church.

Since the new Government came in power in December 2000, no approvals have been granted on the grounds that the Government is changing the composition and mission of the commission in charge of issuing such approvals. Some religious groups allege that this is a pretext used by the Government to deny them approval for the construction of places of worship. In May 2001, the new Government instituted new regulations for the commission. While these new regulations no longer differentiate between recognized religions and unrecognized religions in terms of the types of places of worship that can be built, they include provisions that could make approvals more difficult to obtain. For example, the commission is entitled to decide on the "opportuneness" of building the place of worship.

The law does not prohibit or punish assembly for peaceful religious activities. However, several different minority religious groups complained that on various occasions local authorities and Orthodox priests prevented religious activities from taking place, even when they had been issued permits. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church reported difficulties in getting approvals to use public halls for religious activities in the villages of Luna, Baiut, and Valenii de Maramures (Maramures Coun-

ty). Even when the Church could obtain permission, Orthodox priests incited the local population against activities sponsored by the Adventist Church. The religious activities of the Baptist Church and the Evangelical Alliance often have been obstructed by the local authorities under the influence of the local Orthodox clergy in Crucea, Valul lui Traian (Constanta County), Isaccea (Tulcea County), Fratilesti, Savesti (Ialomita County), Vinatori, Tulucesti (Galati County), Sutesti, Gemenele (Braila County). According to Jehovah's Witnesses, in January 2001 a school principal in Tirgu Neamt (Neamt County) was asked by the mayor to resign on the grounds of his religious affiliation, allegedly following pressure by the local Orthodox priest.

The Government permits, but does not require religious instruction in public schools. Only the 15 recognized religions are entitled to hold religion classes in public schools. While the law permits instruction according to the faith of students' parents, minority recognized religious groups complain that they have been unable to have classes offered in their faith in public schools. According to minority religious groups, this happens mostly because the local inspectors for religion classes are Orthodox priests who deny accreditation to teachers of other religions. Religious teachers are permitted to instruct only students of the same religious faith. However, minority religious groups credibly asserted that there were cases of children pressured to attend classes of Orthodox religion, despite the fact that religion classes were optional, according to the Education Law. The Jehovah's Witnesses Association reported one case in Agapia (Neamt County), where a child member was subject to the threat of not graduating unless she attended the Orthodox religion classes. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church reported similar situations in Crasna Visuelui (Maramures County), Ciocanari and Mircea Voda (Braila County), Provita (Prahova County), Tirgoviste and Bucsanii (Dimbovita County).

Only the 15 recognized religions are entitled to give religious assistance to prisoners. Minority recognized religious groups complained that Orthodox priests denied them access to some penitentiaries. Seventh-Day Adventists asserted that they were not allowed to give religious assistance in the penitentiaries of Gherla and Poarta Alba. Moreover, Orthodox priests in the penitentiaries of Margineni and Gaesti gave their approval only after reviewing religious material to be handed over to the prisoners. The Baptist Church also had difficulties in getting access to the penitentiaries of Oradea, Satu Mare, and Carei.

In May 2001, the Parliament overturned government Decree 106 of 2000. Accordingly, there is no legislation at present regarding military clergy. Decree 106 of August 2000 entitled the 15 recognized religions to have military clergy trained to render religious assistance to conscripts. According to minority religions, with the exception of two representatives of the Catholic and the Evangelical Alliance, the military clergy is comprised only of Orthodox priests. The Baptist Church has similar complaints concerning religious instruction and military clergy.

The Parliament has passed no law restituting religious or communal properties, large numbers of which were seized under the Communist regimes. Some religious or communal property has been returned to former owners as a result of government decrees, or with the agreement of local religious leaders. The center-right government in office between 1996 and 2000 issued four decrees and a government decision, restituting 100 buildings to religious and national minorities. A fifth decree, 94 of 2000, would have returned 10 buildings to each territorial unit of each religious denomination from which property was seized. An October 2000 government decree created a commission to consider a list of properties submitted by churches under Decree 94 of 2000. According to this decree, both the Hungarian churches and the Greek Catholic Church would have received buildings. However, following the election of the new Government, implementation of this decree was halted, and no properties actually have been restituted under the provisions of Decree 94 of 2000.

In many cases religious minorities have not succeeded in regaining actual possession of the properties despite restitution by these decrees. Many properties returned by decree house state offices, schools, hospitals, or cultural institutions that would require relocation, and lawsuits and protests by current possessors have delayed restitution of the property to the rightful owners.

Law 10 of 2001 on nationalized buildings, passed in January 2001, specifies that a different law is to address the restitution of communal property. This law excepts from restitution the properties now being used "in the public interest," such as hospitals, schools, cultural buildings, party headquarters, nongovernmental organization (NGO) offices, and day-care centers. In some cases, the former owners are to receive compensation, the value of which is unclear. A law on compensation is expected to be adopted at a later, unspecified date.

The Greek Catholic community has been less successful than any other group in regaining its properties. The Greek Catholic Church was the second largest denomi-

nation (about 1.5 million adherents out of a population of about 15 million) in 1948 when Communist authorities outlawed it and dictated its forced merger with the Romanian Orthodox Church. The latter received most of the former Greek Catholic properties, including over 2,600 churches and other facilities.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, the Greek Catholic Church has received 200 of the churches transferred by the Communists to the Orthodox Church; the Greek Catholics claim they have received only 137 such properties. The Greek Catholic Church has very few places of worship. Many followers still are compelled to hold services in public places (approximately 105 such cases, according to Greek Catholic reports) or in parks (3 cases, in Baia Mare, Prunis, and Rosia Montana, according to the same reports.) In 1992 the Government adopted a decree that listed 80 properties owned by the Greek Catholic Church to be returned. Between 60 and 65 of them have been returned to date. In some cases, Orthodox priests whose families had been Greek Catholics converted back to Greek Catholicism and brought their parishes and churches back with them to the Greek Catholic Church. In several counties, in particular in Transylvania, local Orthodox leaders have given up smaller country churches voluntarily. For example, in the Diocese of Lugoj in the southwestern part of the country, local Orthodox Church representatives have reached agreement on the return of an estimated 160 churches; however, for the most part Orthodox leaders have refused to return to the Greek Catholics those churches that they acquired during the Communist era. Since July 2000, the Greek Catholic Church has recovered only 1 church and 500 of the 3,200 square meters of land it claimed in the village of Unirea (Cluj County). Orthodox Archbishop of Timisoara, Nicolae Corneanu, was responsible for returning some churches, including the cathedral in Lugoj, to the Greek Catholic Church. However, due to his actions, the Orthodox Holy Synod marginalized Archbishop Corneanu and his fellow clergymen criticized him.

A 1990 government decree called for the creation of a joint Orthodox and Greek Catholic committee to decide the fate of churches that had belonged to the Greek Catholic Church before 1948. However, the Government has not enforced this decree, and the Orthodox Church consistently has resisted efforts to resolve the issue in that forum. The committee did not meet until October 1998 and had three more meetings in 1999. The courts generally refuse to consider Greek Catholic lawsuits seeking restitution, citing the 1990 decree establishing the joint committee to resolve the issue. From the initial property list of 2,600 seized properties, the Greek Catholic Church has reduced the properties that it is asking to be returned to fewer than 300, all of them churches. No agreement on these returns has come from the joint committee meetings. Restitution of the existing churches is important to both sides because local residents are likely to attend the church whether it is Greek Catholic or Orthodox. Thus the number of members and share of the state budget allocation for religions is at stake. At the most recent meeting of the joint committee on September 28, 2000, the Orthodox Church proposed once again to help the Greek Catholics build new churches and agreed to hold alternate religious services with the Greek Catholics for a short period of time until new churches are built. A new meeting of the committee was scheduled for October 2001.

The historical Hungarian churches, including the Roman Catholic as well as the Protestant churches (Reformed, Evangelical, and Unitarian), have received a small number of their properties back from the Government. Churches from these denominations were closed but not seized by the Communist regimes. However, the Communist regimes confiscated many of these groups' secular properties, which still are used for public schools, museums, libraries, post offices, and student dormitories. Of the 1,791 buildings reclaimed by the Hungarian churches, 110 buildings were restituted by government decrees. Of these 110 buildings, 80 should have been restituted according to government Decree 94 of 2000. Of the remaining 30, the Hungarian churches could take full or at least partial possession of only 8 buildings. The restitution of another 9 buildings is in progress. Restitution of the remainder has been delayed due to lawsuits or opposition from current possessors. For example, restitution under Decree 13 of 1998 of the Roman-Catholic Bishop's Palace in Oradea and the Batthyanaeum Library (which had also belonged to the Roman Catholic Church) has been delayed by lawsuits. In addition, the new Minister of Culture and Religious Denominations has stated that he is opposed to their restitution, irrespective of the court rulings on these lawsuits.

The Jewish community has received, by government decree, 42 buildings. Of these, the community has completed the paperwork for the restitution of only 15, and lawsuits are in progress for 7 of these 15 properties. The Jewish community has been able to reclaim land only in Iasi, where it received 15 pieces of land (of former synagogues and schools) between 1999 and 2000.

Another problem with restitution is often a simple refusal by the possessor to return a property or pay rent for occupancy. The nominal owner still can be held liable for payment of property taxes in such cases. For example, the former Reformed College was restituted to the Reformed Church in Cluj by government decree in 1999. The building currently is used as a high school, which does not pay any rent, and the Reformed Church has had to pay property taxes but has not been able to occupy the property.

According to Law 1 of 2000, religious denominations are entitled to claim between 25 to 250 acres of farmland (depending on the type of religious unit—parish, eparchy, bishopric, etc.) and up to 75 acres of forest land from properties seized by the Communists. This is the first law that establishes a systematic procedure for churches to claim land. However, the implementation of this provision has been delayed and the Government has expressed an intention to modify the law.

The Hungarian churches repeatedly have expressed dissatisfaction with the Government's failure to allow by law the establishment of confessional schools subsidized by the State.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the different religious groups. However, the Romanian Orthodox Church repeatedly has criticized strongly the "aggressive proselytizing" of Protestant, neo-Protestant, and other religious groups, which the Church has repeatedly described as "sects." There is no law against proselytizing, or clear understanding of what activities consist of proselytizing. Proselytizing that involves denigrating established churches is perceived as provocative. This has led to conflicts in some cases. For example, an Orthodox priest beat a Mormon missionary in the streets of Pitesti (Arges County) in May 2001. The police, although not very cooperative initially, eventually contributed to resolving this conflict. On June 20, 2001, members of the "New Right" (Noua Drapta) organization (a small, right-extreme group with nationalistic, xenophobic views) allegedly beat four Mormon missionaries while riding on a streetcar in Bucharest. Harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Mizil continued during the period covered by this report. In July 2000, during a trial initiated by persons with ties to the Orthodox Church, the court in Mizil ordered six members of Jehovah's Witnesses to pay penal fines on charges of insult and assault. A higher county court rejected Jehovah's Witnesses appeal in December 2000. Jehovah's Witnesses have decided to file a complaint with the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The centuries-long domination of the Orthodox Church, and its status as the majority religion, has resulted in the Orthodox Church's reluctance (in particular at the local level and with the support of low-level officials) to accept the existence of other religions. Consequently, actions by other religious groups to attract members are perceived by the Orthodox Church as attempts to diminish the number of its members. Due to its substantial influence, few politicians dare to sponsor bills and measures that would oppose the Orthodox Church. According to minority religious groups, the population is receptive to minority Christian confessions and local officials tend to be tolerant but often are pressured and intimidated by the Orthodox clergy. Minority religious groups allege that the Orthodox clergy have provoked isolated mob incidents.

Representatives of minority religions credibly complain that only Orthodox priests grant religious assistance in hospitals, children's homes, and shelters for the elderly. Charitable activities carried out by other churches in children's homes and shelters often have been interpreted as proselytizing. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church mentioned incidents mostly in rural areas, where Orthodox priests had not allowed Adventist ministers to conduct the burial rituals in localities where the number of Adventist members was small. Such cases occurred in Costesti and Armasu (Bacau County), Cuparu and Doicesti (Dambovita County), Busteni and Cojasca (Prahova County), Scinteia and Progresu (Ialomita County), Malu (Giurgiu County), as well as in some localities in Galati, Bacau, and Iasi Counties. However, in most cases, the problems were resolved with the intervention of the prefect, the representative of the central Government to the country's counties.

The Greek Catholic, Baptist, and Pentecostal Churches also have reported similar refusals by Orthodox clergy to allow the burial of the believers of these churches

in Orthodox cemeteries. Cases have occurred in Negresti Oas (Satu Mare County), according to Greek Catholic reports, and in Bihor County, according to Baptist reports.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church also reported a series of peaceful assemblies that were disrupted by noisy groups, allegedly incited by Orthodox clergy, including incidents in Ciudanovita and Glimoca (Caras Severin County). According to Adventists, Orthodox priests beat school children for having participated in Adventist meetings and Orthodox priests insulted Adventist members, for example in Perieni (Ias County).

In some areas, Orthodox clergy threatened Baptist ministers in order to make them leave the localities.

According to the Baha'i Faith, a show and an exhibit sponsored by their association in Herestrau Park in Bucharest in July 2000 were disrupted by a group of youths, who called them a "sect," used the Nazi greeting, shouted "long live the Orthodox Church," and destroyed all the exhibit materials. The police cooperated with the Baha'is in investigating the incident.

In addition, the dialog between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic churches has not eliminated disputes at the local level and has led to little real progress in solving the problem of the restitution of the Greek Catholic assets (see Section II).

The disputes between Greek Catholics and Orthodox believers over church possession have decreased in number during the period covered by this report. This was due mostly to the Greek Catholics' decision in many cases to build new churches, following lack of progress made in obtaining their properties back either by dialog with the Orthodox Church or in court. Tensions continue to exist in Prunis (Cluj County) where most of the residents belong to the Greek Catholic Church and are forced to hold religious services in the open because the Orthodox priest does not allow them to use the church. In Decea (Alba County) tensions increased when the Orthodox priest locked the church so that the Greek Catholics could not use it. In Bicsad (Satu Mare County), where the Greek Catholics obtained a government decision restituting a former Greek Catholic monastery, the Greek Catholic Church still could not take possession of the monastery because of the opposition of the local Orthodox clergy. Local authorities have not supported the enforcement of the Government's decision.

In Dumbraveni the Orthodox Church's opposition to a court-ordered resolution to share the local church has forced the Greek Catholics to hold their religious services in a high school. The Orthodox Church eventually decided to build a new church and to restitute the old one to the Greek Catholics after it is completed. Until then, the Greek Catholics continue holding the religious service in the school building.

Most mainstream politicians have criticized anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia publicly. In March 2001, President Ion Iliescu strongly condemned racism, xenophobia, and intolerance in his address to an international symposium on this issue. However, the fringe press continued to publish anti-Semitic articles. Legionnaire (an extreme nationalist, anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi group) books from the interwar period continued to be published. There have been repeated attempts to deny the Holocaust in the country (through symposia and press articles) and to rehabilitate World War II dictator Marshal Ion Antonescu. Three textbooks on sects and ecumenism, authored by an Orthodox deacon for use in schools, disseminate anti-Semitic, pro-Fascist, and antiecumenical ideas.

In May 2001, the Israeli ambassador expressed concern about the publication of two jokes about the extermination of Jews by the Nazis in a book published by a member of the right-extreme Greater Romania Party (PRM). The Minister of Justice called for an investigation, the publishing house sent a letter of apology to the Israeli Ambassador, and the PRM leader apologized to the Jewish community.

Over the period covered by the report, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated in six localities. The perpetrator was identified in only one case. The perpetrators in the other five cases could not be identified, but are believed to have been local youths, rather than members of an organized anti-Semitic movement. Four synagogues were desecrated during the same period. In December 2000, the Museum of Jewish History in Bucharest was ransacked. President Iliescu and other prominent figures expressed concern about this act of vandalism. The perpetrators remained unidentified.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy met with the PSDR Government early in 2001 when it seemed about to resubmit the old religious bill, and reiterated the U.S. Government's objections to it, as had

been done had with the previous Government. The Embassy also maintains close contact with a broad range of religious groups in the country. Embassy staff, including the human rights officer, political counselor, and the Ambassador, met with religious leaders and government officials who work on religious affairs in Bucharest and in other cities.

In addition, Embassy staff members are in frequent contact with numerous NGO's that monitor developments in the country's religious life. U.S. officials have lobbied consistently in government circles for fair treatment on property restitution issues, including religious and communal properties. The Embassy has a core group of officials who focus on fostering good ethnic relations, including relations between religious groups.

The U.S. Embassy has developed an International Visitors program on religious freedom, within which a group of clergy belonging to different religious denominations traveled to the U.S. for 3 weeks in June 2001.

RUSSIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and for the separation of church and state, in practice the Government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Local authorities continued to restrict the rights of some religious minorities in some regions. Despite court decisions which liberalized its interpretation, the complex 1997 "Law on Religion," which replaced a more generous 1990 law, seriously disadvantages religious groups that are new to the country by making it difficult for them to register as religious organizations, and thus obtain the status of juridical person, which includes the right to establish bank accounts, own property, issue invitations to foreign guests, publish literature, and conduct worship services in prisons and state-owned hospitals. However, individuals affiliated with unregistered faiths are entitled to rent facilities where religious services can be held.

The Ministry of Justice reported that as of January 31, 2001, more than 20,215 organizations had sought registration or reregistration, and 2,095 of these faced the possibility of "liquidation," i.e. deprivation of juridical status. These included large numbers of Muslim congregations, as well as local congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Salvation Army, the Church of Scientology, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), most of which had officially registered national organizations. There were reports that by May 2001 around 100 organizations had been liquidated. The Ministry of Justice stated that most of these were defunct, but religious minority denominations and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) noted that a number were active and had attempted to reregister. Some of these cases involving active groups were being contested in court as of the end of the period covered by this report.

Contradictions between federal and local law in some regions, and varying interpretations of the law, provide regional officials with pretexts to restrict the activities of religious minorities. Discriminatory practices at the local level are also attributable to the relatively greater susceptibility of local governments to lobbying by majority religions, as well as to discriminatory attitudes that are held widely in society. President Vladimir Putin's articulated desire for greater centralization of power and strengthened rule of law led to some improvements in the area of religious freedom in the regions.

Over the last 2 years there have been indications of a growing convergence between the Russian Orthodox Church and the State. The Church has entered into a number of agreements, some formal, others informal, with government ministries on such matters as guidelines for public education, religious training for government employees and military personnel, and, in certain cases, law enforcement and customs decisions, that appear to give it a preferred position. There is evidence that the Procurator General has encouraged local prosecutors to challenge the registration and reregistration of some non-traditional religious groups. In a number of such cases, local courts have upheld the right of non-traditional groups to register or reregister.

The authorities forcibly hospitalized a Unification Church member in a psychiatric ward for 9 days while they attempted to gather evidence against the group. There were isolated instances in which local officials detained individuals engaged in public discussion of their religious views.

While religious matters are not a source of societal hostility for most citizens, relations between different religious organizations are frequently tense, particularly at the leadership level, and there continue to be instances of religiously motivated violence. Popular attitudes toward Muslims are negative in many regions, and there are manifestations of anti-Semitism as well as societal hostility toward newer, non-Orthodox, religions.

The U.S. Government has continued to engage the Government, a number of religious denominations and groups, NGO's, and others in a steady dialog on religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of about 6.5 million square miles and its population is approximately 147.5 million.

There are no reliable statistics that break down the country's population by denomination. Available information suggests that slightly more than half of all inhabitants consider themselves Russian Orthodox Christians, although the vast majority are not regular churchgoers. In an opinion poll conducted in February 2000 and published in the newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* on April 26, 2000, 54 percent of the respondents (of an unknown total number) stated that they were Russian Orthodox, 3 percent Muslims, 0.4 percent Catholic, 0.3 percent Jewish, 1 percent "other religions," and 39 percent atheist or agnostic. However, these statistics do not reflect the considerable growth in the numbers of Protestant believers, many of whose congregations are unregistered. By some estimates, Protestants constitute the third largest group of believers after Orthodox Christians and Muslims. An estimated 600,000 to one million Jews remain in Russia (0.5 percent of the total population) following large-scale emigration over the last two decades. The vast majority of Jews, about 80 percent, live in Moscow or St. Petersburg.

The Ministry of Justice reports that as of the end of January 2001, approximately 18,130 organizations were registered or reregistered, compared with approximately 16,000 in 1987. The number of groups reregistered at that time of the Ministry of Justice report was as follows: Russian Orthodox Church 7,910 groups, Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church 37, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad 20, Ukrainian Orthodox Church 8, Old Believer 171, Roman Catholic 205, Armenian Apostolic 29, Muslim 2,610, Buddhist 110, Jewish 100, Baptist 672, Pentecostal 518, Seventh-Day Adventist 305, Lutheran 167, Apostolic 61, Methodist 53, Presbyterian 107, Anglican 1, Jehovah's Witnesses 203, Salvation Army 4, Mormons 14, Krishna 71, Baha'i 16, Unification Church 2. In addition, 4,739 organizations, which may include both new affiliates of the denominations listed above or new organizations, registered for the first time.

The number of registered religious organizations does not reflect the entire demography of religious believers. For example, as a result of a number of problems related to both intraconfessional disputes and poor administrative procedures on the part of local authorities, an estimated 500 to several thousand Muslim organizations remain unregistered. The registration figures probably also underestimate the number of Pentecostal believers. New Pentecostal organizations are being formed rapidly, and unofficial estimates suggest that there are between 1,500 and 2,000 Pentecostal congregations nationwide, many of which are unregistered. In addition to those listed, the Unification Church has at least 28 other organizations that it is unable to register.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state, in practice the Government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions.

In 1990, the Soviet Government adopted a law on religious freedom designed to make all religions equal before the law. (After the breakup of the Soviet Union, this law became part of the Russian Federation's legal code.) The 1990 law forbade government interference in religion and established simple registration procedures for religious groups. Registration of religious groups was not required, but groups could obtain a number of advantages by registering, such as the ability to establish official places of worship or benefit from tax exemptions. The 1990 Religion Law helped facilitate a revival of religious activity.

In October 1997, the Duma enacted and then-President Boris Yeltsin signed, a new, restrictive, and potentially discriminatory law on religion. The 1997 Religion Law ostensibly targeted so-called “totalitarian sects” or dangerous religious “cults.” However, the intent of some of the law’s sponsors appears to have been to discriminate against members of foreign and less well-established religions by making it difficult for them to manifest their beliefs through organized religious institutions.

The 1997 Law on Religion is very complex, with many ambiguous and contradictory provisions. It creates various categories of religious communities with differing levels of legal status and privileges. The law distinguishes between religious “groups” and “organizations,” and creates two categories of organizations: “regional” and “centralized.” A religious “group” is a congregation of worshipers that is not registered and consequently does not have the legal status of a juridical person—it may not open a bank account, own property, issue invitations to foreign guests, publish literature, or conduct worship services in prisons and state-owned hospitals. A “group” does not enjoy tax benefits and other rights extended to religious organizations, such as the right of its members to proselytize. The law does not purport to abridge the rights of individual members of groups in other respects. For example, a member of a religious group can buy property for the group’s use, invite personal guests to engage in religious instruction, and import religious material. Groups are permitted to rent public spaces and hold services. Nonetheless, in practice, groups that are not registered encounter formidable difficulty in achieving these rights.

The 1997 law provided that local congregations that had existed for 15 years were eligible for registration as local “organizations.” A “centralized religious organization” can be founded by a confession that has 3 functioning local “organizations” (each of which must have at least 10 members who are citizens) in different regions. A centralized organization has the right to establish affiliated local organizations without adhering to the 15-year rule. In implementing this provision, the Government has extended this definition to include a “registered centralized managing center.” Among the law’s most controversial provisions are those that limit the rights, activities, and status of religious “groups” existing in the country for less than 15 years and require that religious groups exist for 15 years before they can qualify for “organization” status.

Implementation of the 1997 law has been a source of concern for many religious minorities, especially those based outside the country. Groups that did not manage to register under the old law or groups that are new to the country are severely hindered in their ability to practice their faith. However, for those that were registered before the passage of the 1997 law, the situation is somewhat better. The Constitutional Court’s November 1999 ruling effectively “grandfathered in” a number of religious organizations that were registered at the time the 1997 law was passed but could not prove 15 years of operation in Russia.

In practice the registration process, which involves simultaneous registration at both the federal and local levels, has proven to be onerous for a number of confessions, because it requires considerable time, effort, and legal expense. International and well-funded domestic religious organizations, in particular, began the reregistration process soon after publication of the regulations governing reregistration. However, other religious groups faced significant problems in registration and reregistration, and local officials refused to register some groups.

Officials of the Presidential Administration, the regions, and localities have established consultative mechanisms to facilitate government interaction with religious communities and to monitor application of the Law on Religion. Groups interact with a special governmental interministerial commission on religion, which includes representatives from law enforcement bodies, on matters involving implementation of the laws and similar questions. On broader policy questions, religious groups interact with a special department within the Presidential Administration’s Directorate for Domestic Policy. Nevertheless, as a result of the lack of specific guidance on how to apply the 1997 law correctly and the shortage of knowledgeable local officials, registering before the December 31, 2000, deadline was a significant obstacle for a number of religious bodies, which are either subject to liquidation or have been liquidated.

According to Ministry of Justice figures published in May 2001, approximately 18,130 organizations were reregistered or registered anew, while 2,095 (10 percent of 20,215) organizations are subject to liquidation (elimination of legal status as a juridical person). This represents an increase of over 1200 organizations officially registered since the 1997 religion law went into effect. Ministry of Justice officials estimate that as of May 2001, nearly 100 organizations have been liquidated through court proceedings. The majority of such organizations may exist on paper only. However, some of them appear to have been liquidated after repeated attempts to register with the local branch of the Ministry of Justice failed.

Religious groups also can work through a Presidential Council on Cooperation with Religious Organizations, composed of members of the Presidential Administration, secular academics who are specialists on religious affairs, and representatives of religious denominations making up the majority of believers in the country. In March 2000, the Government announced that the Council had been reorganized, reduced in size, and its membership changed. All government officials who previously held positions on the Council, other than those representing the Presidential Administration, lost their seats. Religious denominations also lost several seats, and in some cases groups that had previously had several representatives were reduced to only one. This reorganization was criticized by some groups. For example, longtime Council member Rabbi Adolf Shayevich of the Moscow Choral Synagogue lost his seat to his rival Rabbi Berel Lazar of the Moscow Lubavitch community, who has tended not to criticize the Russian Government under Putin; this led to allegations of government favoritism and politically motivated interference in the affairs of the Jewish community. Other groups such as Pentecostals, which have several large umbrella organizations, were allowed only one representative as well. Some NGO's have alleged that the prominent role of members of the Presidential Administration in the Council's activities gives the Council a greater influence with the Ministry of Justice on registering some religious groups than those implied in its mandated advisory role.

Religious groups also can interact with the authorities through the offices of the new Plenipotentiary Presidential District Representatives (PolPreds) of the seven newly formed districts of the Russian Federation. In the administrative structures of at least some of the Polpreds, offices have been designated to deal with social and religious issues. There is also a department of religious affairs in each regional administration and in many municipal administrations. However, it is at the regional and municipal level that religious minorities often encounter the greatest problems.

The office of Russian Federation Human Rights Ombudsman Oleg Mironov set up a department dedicated to religious freedom issues. This department receives numerous complaints from individuals and groups about infringement of religious freedom. Mironov has criticized the 1997 Religion Law publicly on many occasions and recommended changes to bring it into accordance with international standards and with the Constitution. He also lobbied President Putin unsuccessfully to extend the deadline for reregistration. Nevertheless, some argue that these efforts come too late for organizations facing liquidation, since the deadline for reregistration expired December 31, 2000.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Among the Law on Religion's most controversial provisions are those that limit the rights, activities, and status of religious "groups" existing in the country for less than 15 years and require that religious groups exist for 15 years before they can qualify for "organization" status. These articles may violate the Constitution's provision of equality before the law of all religious confessions.

The cases of a Khakasiya Pentecostal church and the Yaroslavl Jehovah's Witnesses formed the basis of a constitutional challenge to the Law on Religion filed with the Constitutional Court in May 1998 by the Institute for Religion and Law, an NGO. The petitioners claimed that the provision of the law requiring religious organizations to prove 15 years of existence in the country in order to register is unconstitutional. In a November 1999 hearing, the Constitutional Court upheld the 15-year provision, but also ruled that religious organizations registered before the passage of the 1997 law need not meet the 15-year requirement in order to register.

However, this ruling does not enable independent churches with less than 15 years in the country to register as religious organizations unless they were registered before the passage of the law or affiliate themselves with existing centralized organizations. The Institute for Religion and Law and other NGO's note that this is a significant restriction for small independent religious communities and foreign-based "new religions," such as the Church of Scientology. Also, some domestic human rights activists are concerned by language in the ruling that cites 1993 and 1996 decisions in the European Court of Human Rights regarding religious sects, and upholds the right of the Government to place certain limits on the activity of religious groups in the interests of national security. The Security Council adopted a National Security Concept in the spring of 2000 that includes a specific warning on the allegedly negative impact of foreign missionary activity.

Despite the Federal Government's efforts to implement the 1997 Religion Law liberally and to provide assurances that religious freedom would be observed, restrictions continue at the local level. The vagueness of the law and regulations, the contradictions between federal and local law, and varying interpretations provide re-

gional officials with a pretext for restricting the activities of religious minorities. Discriminatory practices at the local level are partly attributable to the decentralization of power that occurred during the Yeltsin era. They are also due to the relatively greater susceptibility of local governments to lobbying by majority religions and discriminatory attitudes that are held widely in society. However, under the Putin Administration, the Government has attempted to rectify this situation to some degree by introducing measures to strengthen the center in its relations with the regions. As part of this effort, President Putin divided the country into seven districts overseen by the Polpreds and introduced a federal register to ensure that local legislation conforms to the Federation's Constitution and federal laws.

Since 1994, 33 of the country's 89 regional governments have passed laws and decrees intended to restrict the activities of religious groups. In May 2001, the Ministry of Justice reported that these 33 regions passed 50 regional laws and other legislative bills relating to freedom of religion. The Ministry determined that 35 of these were unconstitutional or not in conformity with federal legislation. The Federal Government was not able to challenge effectively the unconstitutionality of these restrictions before the advent of the Putin administration, although under President Yeltsin it sent warnings to 30 regions regarding the unconstitutionality of local laws concerning religion. In 2000 and the first half of 2001, regional administrations have been required to register local laws, a procedure that ensures that they are in accordance with federal legislation. This process of centralization and coordination of authority was continuing as of the end of the period covered by this report. As of the end of May 2001, 6 of the 35 laws were rescinded, and 8 were brought into conformance with federal law. The Federal Government is able to work through the Procurator, Minister of Justice, Presidential Administration, and the courts to force regions to comply with federal law. The Government also has become more active in preventing or reversing discriminatory actions taken at the local level by more actively disseminating information to the regions and, when necessary, reprimanding the officials at fault. For example, the Presidential Academy of State Service has actively worked with religious freedom advocates such as the Slavic Center for Law and Justice to train regional and municipal officials in properly implementing the law.

Implementation of the 1997 law has been a source of concern by many religious minorities, especially those based outside the country. Groups that did not manage to register under the old law or groups that are new to the country are severely hindered in their ability to practice their faith. However, for those that were registered before passage of the 1997 law, the situation is somewhat better. The Constitutional Court's November 1999 ruling effectively "grandfathered in" a number of religious organizations that were registered at the time the 1997 law was passed but could not prove 15 years of operation in Russia. For example, in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, the 15 year rule no longer prevented the registration of newly created local Jehovah's Witnesses religious organizations, nor reregistration of organizations which were registered at the time of implementation of the 1997 law, but which were less than 15 years old.

In practice the registration process, which involves simultaneous registration at both the federal and local levels, has proven onerous for a number of confessions; it requires considerable time, effort, and legal expense. International and well-funded domestic religious organizations, in particular, began the reregistration process soon after publication of the regulations governing reregistration. Russian Pentecostal groups, which have a solid and growing network of churches throughout the country, sought guidance from the Ministry of Justice on reregistration as early as November 1997. However, a large number of Pentecostal parishes (by some estimates up to 500) remain unregistered. This is partially because some congregations refuse to register out of philosophical convictions. In many other cases, local officials, sometimes prejudiced by close relations with local Russian Orthodox officials, have refused to register Pentecostal and other non-Orthodox organizations.

According to NGO and media reports and government officials, registration of Muslim religious organizations proceeded slowly, leaving many local religious organizations unable to reregister before the December 31, 2000, deadline. The process was complicated by irregularities in registration in some Muslim regions like Bashkortostan and Dagestan, which required federal intervention. An intraconfessional conflict between rival Muslim groups exacerbated the situation. A struggle between the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in European Russia and Siberia, based in Ufa and led by Mufti Talgat Tadzhuddin, and the Moscow-based Russian Council of Muftis, led by Chief Mufti Ravil Gainutdin, appears to have hindered reregistration efforts by Muslim organizations. According to the Ministry of Justice, only 2,610 Muslim organizations had reregistered by May 2001, a decrease of nearly 400 registered organizations compared to 1997. The mutual accusations of

“Wahhabism” by the two groups have complicated matters, since this pejorative label (as used in Russia) may have had a detrimental affect on reregistration in certain regions and has made local ethnic Russians more wary of Muslim religious organizations. (The word “Wahhabi” refers to a Sunni branch of Islam that has become a pejorative term in Russia because of persistent allegations that “Wahhabi extremism” is to blame for terrorist attacks linked to the war in Chechnya.) Recognizing the scope of the problem, federal officials have directed that local branches of the Ministry of Justice refrain from liquidating Muslim organizations until the problem can be resolved. The implication is that those organizations that did not manage to reregister are expected to be able to do so even though the deadline passed several months ago. However, according to an April 11, 2000, report by Keston News Service, Kabardino-Balkariya authorities have liquidated 37 Muslim organizations that failed to submit documents for reregistration. Keston News Service also reported in April that the Kabardino-Balkaria regional parliament had passed a law banning extremist religious activities that was aimed primarily at “Wahhabism.” A similar ban exists in Dagestan.

On November 24, 2000, Keston news service reported that the Federal Security Service (FSB) provided information to local newspapers in Kostroma to discredit the pastor of a local Pentecostal Church involved in litigation over its impending liquidation. Despite the fact that the articles appeared before the court process began, the Church won its court case.

The Church of Scientology has experienced many problems with both registration and harassment from the authorities. It was registered as a religious organization only in Moscow in 1994. Despite repeated attempts to reregister this organization in Moscow, the Moscow office of the Ministry of Justice reconsidered reregistering the organization only after many refusals and a December 2000 court ruling. However, the Ministry, having consulted with the Procurator, decided to challenge the court’s decision. As a result, the Church is still not reregistered and faces liquidation.

In its preamble (which government officials insist has no legal standing), the 1997 Religion Law recognizes the “special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia’s spirituality and culture.” It accords “respect” to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and certain other religions as an inseparable part of the country’s historical heritage. Many citizens firmly believe that at least nominal adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is at the heart of what it means to be Russian. This belief appears to have manifested itself in a church-state relationship that is detrimental to non-Orthodox denominations.

Under the 1997 Religion Law, representative offices of foreign religious organizations are required to register with state authorities. They are barred from conducting liturgical services and other religious activity unless they have acquired the status of a group or organization. Although the law officially requires all foreign religious organizations to register, in practice foreign religious representatives’ offices (those not registered under law) have opened without registering or have been accredited to a registered religious organization. However, those offices cannot carry out religious activities and do not have the status of a religious “organization.”

The Russian Orthodox Church has made special arrangements with government agencies to conduct religious education and to provide spiritual counseling. Although other denominations, such as Protestant groups, have been granted access to military personnel, it is on a much more limited basis than that accorded to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Church has signed agreements with the Ministries of Education, Defense, Health, Interior, and the Tax Ministry over the last year. The details of these agreements are far from transparent, but from the information available the Church appears to be accorded preferential treatment over other denominations by these ministries.

Deputy Minister of Education Chepurnykh sent out a letter July 12, 2000, to all institutions of higher education warning of the threat from certain Western religious groups termed “extremist and destructive” and accusing the West of trying to undermine citizens by introducing “Western values” into education. Among the “cults” mentioned in the letter are Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, and the Mormons. The arguments in the letter echo statements made by Church officials including Patriarch Aleksiy II, who was reported on a December 20, 2000, television program as saying that the Russian Orthodox Church was concerned by the flood of various “cults” into Russia and by “pseudomissionaries.” The Patriarch declared that, “certain forces want Satanists and other cults on our land, who employ psychotropic methods of hypnosis and steal the souls of our fellow countrymen.” When the contents of the Ministry of Education letter became public, numerous minority denominations and NGO’s protested. The

Keston Institute on November 17, 2000 reported that its correspondent received mixed responses from Ministry of Education officials. One official reportedly said that the Deputy Minister's letter contained "incorrect formulations," while another official vigorously defended it and claimed that foreign "cults" were behind a wave of ritual killings in schools and that "something had to be done about it."

During a December 26, 2000, press conference, Lev Levinson, a Moscow Atheist Society representative and legislative aide to Duma deputy Sergey Kovalev, complained that the principle of secular education, guaranteed in the Constitution, has eroded. Levinson complained that in Belgorod school children take Bible study as a compulsory subject. Levinson said that even more troubling to him was that bureaucrats improperly transfer funds to the Orthodox Church. He cited as an example the cases of Moscow municipal authorities in Novo Kosinskaya and Ivanovskaya districts who reportedly contributed about \$1,379 (40,000 rubles) toward construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

Public statements by government officials and anecdotal evidence from religious minority groups suggest that the Russian Orthodox Church, in some cases may enjoy a status that approaches official. For example, religious minority groups based abroad have complained that customs officials at times have forwarded religious literature to the Russian Orthodox Church before approving its entry into the country. On October 6, 2000, NTV reported that then-Minister of Interior Rushaylo told a group that he was worried about the spread of various religious "cults" in Russia. He said that his ministry works closely with the Russian Orthodox Church in the interest of spiritual education and strengthening the moral fiber of Ministry of Interior personnel. Rushaylo admitted that relations with the Orthodox Church were much better than with Muslims, most likely because of the absence of a clear hierarchical structure in the organizations of the latter.

On October 17, 2000, NTV reported that the PolPred for the Urals region, Petr Latyshev, called for "strategic coordination" between the Russian Orthodox Church and the State on the basis of the Constitution and laws. Latyshev added that while all "traditional religious denominations" enjoy equal rights before the law, "we should admit that in our state Orthodoxy was and remains the foundation. We will resist any foreign spiritual expansion, taking every measure to help Orthodoxy without infringing on the rights of traditional religions." The Web site, "strana.ru," reported on December 18, 2000, that Latyshev had signed agreements, the first between a PolPred and the Church, with the Russian Orthodox hierarchy in Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, Tobolsk, and Kurgan. In addition, the Southern regional PolPred, Viktor Kazantsev, has espoused publicly positions reflecting discrimination against certain non-Orthodox denominations. For example, the Stavropol newspaper *Verst* reported April 10, 2001 that Kazantsev asked the Russian Orthodox Church for help in fighting so-called "cults." In the article, Kazantsev complained that Mormons are taking over the Volgograd region, as are Krishnas in Cherkessya, Satanists and Pagan cults in Dagestan, Protestants in Kalmykiya, and Jehovah's Witnesses in Krasnodar and Stavropol. Kazantsev said, "We need to recognize without giving offense that the Russian State is primarily Orthodox, and we should behave accordingly." At the request of the Church, Kazantsev offered to help institute a course in public schools on Orthodoxy by the next school year.

NTV reported on October 29, 2000, that Minister of Tax Genadiy Bukayev and Patriarch Aleksiy II signed a cooperation agreement between the Tax Ministry and the Church. According to the agreement, "The parties will work together in preparing and conducting seminars and consultations on the most significant questions of taxation of religious organizations and in developing and executing a program in the socio-cultural sphere." On November 28, 2000, Tass news service reported that Rushaylo told a group of representatives from religious groups in Novosibirsk that there was a need to "neutralize sects preaching religious extremism." Rushaylo blamed so-called "Wahhabism" for initiating the conflict in Dagestan and Chechnya and called for "consolidating cooperation between law enforcement bodies and various religious confessions to tackle jointly prevention of religious extremism in Russia."

The Procurator General has been criticized by human rights activists and religious minority denominations for encouraging legal action against some minority religions and recommending, as authoritative, reference materials that are biased against Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and others. In correspondence with the public and government officials from other ministries, the Procurator has recommended literature that is extremely biased and is published by the Russian Orthodox Church. For example, in a letter to the Chelyabinsk Human Rights Ombudsman that came to light during a recent trial, the procurator's office responded to a request for information about Jehovah's Witnesses by recommending a publication by the Missionary Section of the Russian Orthodox Church entitled "New Religious Or-

ganizations in Russia of a Destructive and Occult Nature.” In addition, the Procurator has distributed a 1999 manual entitled “Activities of Religious Groups. Psychological and Juridical Aspects: Informational Resource Work for Procurator Personnel,” to all regional branches of the procuracy. The manual contains biased descriptions of groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, the Unification Church, and Scientology. Also, the manual appears to provide instructions on how to generate criminal cases against these groups, including sample letters from distraught parents of members of these denominations. After Duma deputy Sergey Kovalev lodged a formal complaint to the Procurator General, a copy of an internal expert analysis was forwarded in response. In the opinion of the Procurator’s expert panel, “the authors of the manual in no way instigate religious strife,” but rather direct procurator personnel to implement the law on freedom of conscience precisely and correctly.”

According to Ministry of Justice figures in May 2001, approximately 18,130 organizations were reregistered or registered anew, while 2,095 (10 percent of 20,215) organizations are subject to liquidation (elimination of legal status as a juridical person). This represents an increase of over 1200 organizations officially registered since the 1997 religion law went into effect. Ministry of Justice officials estimate that as of May 2001, nearly 100 organizations have been liquidated through court proceedings. The majority of such organizations may exist on paper only. However, some of them appear to have been liquidated after the failure of repeated attempts to register with the local branch of the Ministry of Justice. The “Victory of Faith” Pentecostal church in Amursk (Khabarovsk region), for example, was liquidated after repeated attempts to reregister. The local branch of the Ministry of Justice issued a January 25 order to initiate liquidation proceedings, indicating that local authorities ignored oral instructions from federal officials to refrain from initiating liquidation proceedings until February. Eleven affiliated churches that fell under the “Victory of Faith” local religious organization were affected by the liquidation. Church officials and religious freedom advocates claim that the head of the Khabarovsk administration Department of Religion engaged in a campaign against the region’s Pentecostals, hindering the church’s registration efforts and harassing visiting foreign missionaries with frivolous bureaucratic exercises, such as unnecessary document checks and challenges to valid visas, in an attempt to discourage missionaries from staying in the region. As of end of the period covered by this report, it was unclear whether federal officials would intervene.

Two other groups that experienced problems in reregistering were the Salvation Army and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Both have attempted repeatedly to reregister their Moscow local religious organizations without success. In the case of the Salvation Army, it contested the Moscow local branch of the Ministry of Justice’s refusal of registration twice in municipal courts, losing both cases. The experience severely hampered the organization’s activities as Moscow officials temporarily refrained from cooperating on charity projects, and landlords hesitated to renew leases citing imminent liquidation. The Salvation Army finally succeeded in registering as a centralized religious organization at the federal level in December 2000, but efforts to reverse the denial of registration to the Moscow local organization faced further court challenges at the end of the period covered by this report.

Jehovah’s Witnesses unsuccessfully have attempted to reregister the Moscow community of Jehovah’s Witnesses, filing an appeal with a municipal court challenging the refusal. As of mid-2001, the case had not come to trial. The municipal judge has postponed the case five times.

In a separate case in Moscow, not originally based on the 1997 law, Jehovah’s Witnesses are fighting an attempt by the Procurator to ban the local religious organization on the grounds that it is a danger to society. On February 23, 2001, the Golovinskiy municipal court in Moscow ruled against the Procurator, finding no basis to the accusations. However, the Procurator challenged this ruling successfully in a court of appeal, which sent the case back to the Golovinskiy court. Legal proceedings were continuing at the end of the period covered by this report.

Jehovah’s Witnesses indicate that they have experienced problems in reregistering in other locations as well, including Tver, Chelyabinsk, and Kabardino-Balkaria. Legal proceedings in these areas were underway in mid-2001. In Kabardino-Balkaria three local religious organizations of Jehovah’s Witnesses were refused re-registration repeatedly, and on April 24, 2001, a judge in Nalchik ordered the Ministry of Justice to reregister the groups. However, the Ministry refused to do so and challenged the decision. In addition, on May 14 a Jehovah’s Witnesses local religious organization in the same region was liquidated in separate proceedings. In a number of regions, including Tatarstan, Tula, Lipetsk and Oryol, registration was successfully achieved through the courts. Jehovah’s Witnesses have managed to reregister the vast majority of their previously existing religious organizations (199) and

a religious center, despite a handful of difficult cases. Combined with newly registered organizations, they recorded a total of over 300 registered local organizations in 70 regions as of the end of the period covered by this report.

Some religious minority denominations accuse the FSB, Procurator, and other official agencies, of increasingly harassment of certain “nontraditional” denominations, in particular, Pentecostals, Scientologists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Unification Church. Churches have been targeted for ostensible criminal investigations, landlords have been pressured to renege on contracts, and in some cases the security services may have influenced the Ministry of Justice in registration applications.

The Church of Scientology has experienced many problems with both registration and with harassment from the authorities. Since 1999, in particular, the Moscow Scientology Church has come under intense pressure from the authorities. The Procurator formally charged the Church with criminal activities, including distributing medicine illegally. The case was brought to court, but on December 7, 2000, the court returned the case to law enforcement authorities for further investigation because of irregularities in the Procurator’s case. In January 2001, the case was resumed but subsequently was dismissed for lack of evidence. The Procurator appealed; however, on May 19 the appellate court upheld the lower court’s ruling clearing the Scientologists of all charges. The Church of Scientology reportedly is now considering a legal challenge to the Ministry of Justice’s refusal to reregister it. The Church reports that the authorities have impeded the operation of its centers in Dmitrograd, Khabarovsk, Izhevsk, and other localities.

The Moscow Jewish Community, an organization involved in an intraconfessional dispute, came under intense scrutiny from the tax police, the Office of Visa Registration, and the Ministry of Interior for alleged criminal activities. In one instance, the attention came after an unresolved incident of violence within the community. The Community, which is presently registered as a local religious organization, has sought to change its status to that of a central religious organization, but this application has been rejected by the Ministry of Justice’s Moscow Administration, the same office that has impeded registration efforts by the Salvation Army and Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, most of the law enforcement activities directed against the community appeared to be related to a political dispute between former President of the Russian Jewish Congress, Vladimir Gusinskiy, and the Government.

The office of the Procurator General has harassed Krishna believers with a series of frivolous investigations, including examining literature in order to make an expert opinion of whether the beliefs are harmful to society. In at least one instance in late 2000, experts found no basis to the charge that Krishna beliefs represent a danger, but the case was sent back for further evaluation with the possibility of future legal action.

The Mormons have succeeded in registering 35 local religious organizations. However, in several regions local officials impeded registration. For example, since mid-1998 the Mormons have attempted unsuccessfully to register a local religious organization in Kazan, Tatarstan. The Mormons successfully challenged the refusal in court, and the local branch of the Ministry of Justice registered the group. However, the Tatarstan authorities revoked the organization’s registration. The Mormons maintain that this action was illegal. The Mormons also have had difficulty in securing visas for some of their foreign missionaries coming to Russia; in particular, they have had difficulties with the Vladivostok branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Mormons also have had problems in procuring residency permits for missionaries in regions such as Chelyabinsk and Kazan. They assert that the authorities in some areas, including Chelyabinsk, have impeded foreign religious workers from registering, presumably to restrict foreign proselytizing. They also experienced trouble in obtaining permission to build and then occupy an assembly hall in Volgograd; the building was completed eventually, but municipal officials have delayed issuing permission to use the completed building. The local branch of the Ministry of Justice in Chelyabinsk continues to reject the local Mormons’ registration application based on the alleged incompatibility of Mormon activities with federal law. The Chelyabinsk Directorate of Justice also has rejected the registration applications of Baptist, Adventist, and Pentecostal churches on similar grounds.

Roman Catholic religious workers also experienced problems in obtaining desired residency permits and visas. Catholic workers who are assigned full time to parishes in Irkutsk and Samara must go abroad once a year to renew their visas, unlike other foreign workers who can apply for multiple-entry visas or extend their stays. Unlike some other religious workers who obtained permanent residency or citizenship on the basis of marriage to Russian citizens, celibate Catholic clergy do not have this opportunity.

Authorities continued to refuse visas to a number of other missionaries, apparently as a result of earlier conflicts with the authorities. Individuals denied visas

include Dan Pollard, formerly of the Vanino Baptist Church in Khabarovsk region, and David Binkley of the Church of Christ in Magadan, who were denied visas in spite of having been acquitted on tax and customs charges, and Charles Landreth of the Church of Christ in Volgograd who had been accused in the local press of being a spy. A fourth missionary, Monty Race of the Evangelical Free Church of America, who entered the country legally with a visa sponsored by a Moscow congregation, was refused registration to reside in Naberezhniy Chelny, Tartarstan. Race, who is married to a Russian citizen and has two children, has also been refused permission to register as a resident foreign spouse of a citizen. The letter of refusal he received from the Ministry of Internal Affairs's local passport control office cites "national security" concerns.

Disputes concerning the return of religious property confiscated during the Soviet era are cited by religious groups as a source of concern to a number of communities. According to the Presidential Administration, since the 1993 decree went into effect 4,000 buildings have been returned to religious groups. Approximately 3,500 of these were to the Russian Orthodox Church. About 15,000 religious articles, including icons, torahs, and other items, have been returned to religious groups. For the most part, properties of other faiths used for religious services, including synagogues, churches and mosques, have been returned as well, although some in the Jewish community assert that only a small portion of the total properties confiscated under Soviet rule have been returned. On March 15, 2001, Prime Minister Kasyanov ordered the Restitution Commission to cease its activities. Despite the cessation of the Commission's activities, a number of properties and objects have not been returned. For example, the Jewish community, which has met with some success on communal property restitution, is seeking the return of a number of synagogues around the country, of religious scrolls, and of cultural and religious artifacts such as the Schneerson book collection (a revered collection of the Chabad Lubavitch).

Reports continue that some local and municipal governments prevented religious groups from using venues, such as cinemas, suitable for large gatherings. In many areas of the country, government-owned facilities are the only available venues. As a result, in some cases congregations that do not have their own property effectively have been denied the opportunity to practice their faith in large gatherings. For example, Sergey Ryakhovskiy's Pentecostal church, "The Moscow Church of God of Christians of the Evangelical Faith," learned in March 2001 that a local theater that for years had provided space for the Church's meetings reneged on a longstanding agreement after what the Church claims were threats by authorities. According to an April 12, 2001, Keston News Service report, the theater director was summoned to the Culture Committee of the Moscow Regional Administration where he received a letter from the chairman of the committee asking him to cancel his agreement with the church. The theater director reportedly told Ryakhovskiy that the Moscow governor's administration was reacting to an FSB report on the church. Although the governor's office denied these allegations to the Keston correspondent, the theater director refused to confirm or deny the allegations, citing a fear that he might lose his job. Similarly, according to a December 1, 2000, report on NTV, municipal authorities in Penza prevented members of the Protestant church "Living Faith" from using a rented movie theater. The congregation was forced to move to a dilapidated building without heat, where temperatures during the winter reached 15 degrees below zero centigrade. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which does not recognize Patriarch Aleksiy's authority, has had numerous problems obtaining access to places for gathering. According to Keston News Service, as of April 2001, only a small percentage of the Church's 100 parishes meet in a building. Keston speculated that local officials appear reluctant to provide buildings to Orthodox churches not affiliated with the Moscow Patriarch.

According to a May 14, 2001 Keston report, the Vyborg region's chief architect refuses to allow a Protestant congregation to restore or use a building it bought in 1998. Authorities have refused to rezone the site for public (rather than industrial) use. Regional authorities who are attempting to remove a historic mosque have harassed Muslims in Vologda. Keston reported on May 11, 2001, that after the regional government lost its case in the Russian Supreme Court, the Muslim community was subjected to financial investigations, which the community claims are frivolous. Authorities in Sayanogorsk, in the Republic of Khakasiya, also have refused to allow the Pentecostal Church "Glory" to rent or use public space, despite the fact that the Church is registered and has approached the municipal administration repeatedly. Muslims in the Komi Republic and the Karelian regional capital of Petrozavodsk have not been able to build mosques because of what many believe is societal prejudice against Islam. On April 10, 2001, Keston News Service reported that Taganrog authorities ordered the Muslim community to demolish its mosque. Muslims claim

that the order is based on anti-Muslim bias and refuse to carry it out. Hare Krishna leaders in Moscow have sought unsuccessfully for several years to acquire property to build a new temple and center. The Hare Krishna face eviction from the current center as a result of the construction of a new road. Jehovah's Witnesses and Baptists in Moscow and other regions continue to have trouble leasing assembly space and obtaining the necessary permits to renovate buildings.

In Belgorod region, the regional parliament enacted a law restricting missionary activity, including the use of venues in which religious meetings could be held. Foreigners visiting the region are forbidden to engage in missionary activity or to preach unless the conduct of missionary activity had been stated in their visas (some groups reportedly sent religious workers on business or tourist visas in order not to alert the authorities to their activities). Protestant representatives in the region sent a letter of protest to the authorities asserting that the law was in conflict with the Russian constitution. No information was available as of the end of the period covered by this report concerning any attempts to enforce this law. Federal authorities have acknowledged that the Belgorod law is unconstitutional and at the end of the period covered by this report were working with the Oblast authorities to modify it.

Government authorities have been criticized for a long time for insufficient action to counter the prejudice and societal discrimination encountered by Jews and Muslims; however, over the last year the Presidential Administration has been much more vigorous in speaking out against prejudice and societal discrimination. President Putin and officials in his administration have made strong statements on the need for tolerance in a multiethnic Russia and have spoken out against anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, according to human rights activists and NGO's, anti-Semitism is still a significant part of the mindset of some Russian politicians and their constituents. Communist Duma Deputy Vasilii Shandybin often has made derogatory references about Jews in public. For example, after the recent change in NTV management in April 2001, Shandybin complained that the Russian newsman Yevgeniy Kiselev had been replaced by the "American Zionist" Boris Jordan. In April 2001, when a Duma deputy proposed that deputies recognize the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, both Shandybin and his Russian Liberal Democratic Party colleague Vladimir Zhirinovskiy shouted down the proposal, complaining that no one was recognizing Russian victims. However, in May 2001, Duma deputy Aleksandr Fedulov proposed a resolution calling on President Putin to condemn anti-Semitism. The resolution was supported almost unanimously by the pro-government Yedinstvo faction, but did not garner enough votes to pass. The Communist faction voted unanimously against it.

In September 2000, a blatantly anti-Semitic article allegedly written by an official in the Presidential Administration appeared in the newspaper, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. As of the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not confirmed whether or not the official was indeed a member of its administration at the time of writing. Kursk Governor Mikhaylov made anti-Semitic remarks to the press in late November 2000. PolPred Poltavchenko reprimanded the governor in public and forced him to issue an apology.

During the 2000 gubernatorial elections, candidates' supporters in a number of regions resorted to anti-Semitism. Central Elections Commission Head Aleksandr Veshnyakov in December 2000 strongly criticized the use of anti-Semitism in election campaigns and urged candidates to refrain from inciting ethnic or religious intolerance. After a series of "skinhead" attacks in Moscow in May 2001, President Putin, Deputy Prime Minister Matviyenko, and Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov all condemned such "hate crimes" and emphasized the country's multiethnic character.

The Government has implemented partially an interagency program to combat extremism and promote religious and ethnic tolerance. Broad in scope, the original plan called for a large number of interagency measures, such as the review of federal and regional legislation on extremism, mandatory training for public officials on how to promote ethnic and religious tolerance, and new educational materials for use in public educational institutions. Implementation of the plan, which is guided by an interagency commission on combating extremism headed by the Ministry of Education, was sporadic. Nevertheless, at least one NGO was able to work parallel to the program, participating in training law enforcement and other government officials (both local and federal) in promoting tolerance. The Saint Petersburg NGO Harold and Selma Light Center, in conjunction with a foreign-based NGO, conducted successful programs in several northwestern cities such as Petrozavodsk, and has now turned its attention to Ryazan.

In November 1998, the Duma adopted a resolution condemning public statements damaging to interethnic relations in the country. A Government review of the implementation of existing laws against acts of national, racial, and religious hatred re-

ported that 25 criminal investigations were conducted in 1998, and that 10 were opened by June 1999. The Ministry of Justice reported that 17 crimes were investigated under these statutes in 2000. Eight of these cases ended up in court. However, there is no information as to the number of convictions that resulted. Duma deputy Fedulov, during a public debate in May, claimed that only one conviction was obtained. The Moscow City Duma adopted the law forbidding the distribution and display of Nazi symbols in May 1999, and the Moscow regional Duma passed similar legislation in June 1999. As of April 2001, Moscow City Duma deputies were attempting to introduce amendments clarifying procedures for implementation of this law.

In June 2000, a schism in the Jewish Community led to the election by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Lubavitcher Rabbi Berel Lazar as Chief Rabbi of Russia over Rabbi Adolf Shayevech of the Moscow Choral Synagogue. Many in the Jewish community believe that the Government took sides in the dispute, showing overt support and preference for Lazar—for example, making him the sole representative of the Jewish community on the Administration's Religious Affairs Council—over the opposing faction, which was associated with media magnate Vladimir Gusinskiy, the then-President of the Russian Jewish Congress and a critic of the Russian Government. Under the leadership of the new president of the Russian Jewish Congress, Leonid Nevzlin, relations between that organization and the authorities appeared to have changed for the better. Critics point to President Putin's two special appearances during 2000 at events associated with Lazar, but other observers pointed out that Deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matviyenko, PolPred Grigoriy Poltavchenko, and other Presidential Administration officials attended and delivered remarks at the May 15, 2001 rededication of the Moscow Choral Synagogue (associated with Rabbi Shayevech).

In October 2000, Ministry of Interior and tax police entered the Moscow Choral Synagogue and conducted what community members believe to have been an illegal search of the premises. Members of the community accused the Government of employing law enforcement officials against a Gusinskiy-aligned community for political purposes. No charges resulted from the search. However, when it came time to renew the visa registration of the Moscow Chief Rabbi, who presides over the Choral Synagogue, authorities delayed issuing the renewal until the last minute, giving rise to more allegations of interference in religious affairs. The reorganization of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations in February 2001 led to more allegations of interference after it became known that longtime member Rabbi Shayevech had lost his position and that Rabbi Lazar would serve as the sole representative for Russian Jewry.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no official reports of religious detainees or prisoners. However, during a November 17, 2000, legal motion by the Chelyabinsk procurator to liquidate a Unification Church social organization, official documents revealed that member Galina Derevszkova had been hospitalized against her will by the authorities in a psychiatric ward for 9 days while they attempted to gather evidence against the group. They reportedly forced Derevszkova to sign a document after her internment stating that she had submitted herself to the institution for evaluation voluntarily. She was released with no indication of mental health problems.

Keston News Service reported April 19, 2001, that a Court sentenced Aleksandr Volkov from Novocheboksariy to 6 months in prison on March 13, 2001, for refusing to perform military service. Volkov, a Pentecostal Christian, refused to serve because of religious convictions.

Mormon missionaries throughout the country frequently were detained for brief periods or asked by local police to cease their activities, regardless of whether they were actually in violation of local statutes on picketing.

The Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia, along with several human rights organizations, have criticized the use of psychiatry in “deprogramming” victims of “totalitarian sects.” In such cases, authorities use pseudo-psychological and spiritual techniques to “treat” persons who were members of new religious groups. There were no confirmed instances of this taking place during the period covered by this report.

Forced Religious Conversion

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

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The President and other government officials have been increasingly vocal about the need for societal tolerance in a multiethnic and multi-confessional society. While individual Russian politicians continue at times to make anti-Semitic statements, President Putin and his Presidential Administration have taken a very public stand against anti-Semitism and reached out to the Jewish community, including, in the last months of the reporting period, to both factions vying for leadership. President Putin has revamped the office in his Administration that deals with religious affairs and that office appears to be receptive to minority denominations' complaints and in some instances has assisted in resolving problems in the regions. The Presidential Administration co-sponsored a conference bringing together government officials from the regions, scholars, lawyers, NGOs and members of faith-based organizations.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While religious matters are not a source of societal hostility for most citizens, relations between different religious organizations are frequently tense, particularly at the leadership level, and there continue to be instances of religiously motivated violence. Many Russians believe that at least nominal adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is at the heart of what it means to be Russian, and Russian Orthodoxy is considered in conservative nationalist circles as the *de facto* official religion of the country.

There is no large-scale movement in the country to promote interfaith dialog, although on the local level religious groups successfully collaborate on charity projects and participate in interfaith dialog. Russian Pentecostal and Baptist organizations, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church, have been reluctant to support ecumenism. Traditionally, the Russian Orthodox Church has pursued interfaith dialog with other Christians on the international level. However, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed grave reservations about the Pope's June 2001 visit to Ukraine, and the visit gave rise to a number of hostile statements by clerics and parliamentarians. The Patriarch has conditioned any future visit to Russia by the Pope on the settlement of outstanding issues between the two Churches.

Muslims, who constitute approximately 10 percent of the population, continue to encounter societal discrimination and antagonism in some areas where they are a minority. In October 2000, Muslim groups complained about a biased film on Russian Muslims entitled "Half Moon of the Caucasus" that aired on the state television channel, Russian State Television (RTR). The film portrays Muslims as affiliated with extremist forces in Chechnya and as disruptive to society. Muslims also have complained that citizens in certain regions have an irrational fear of Muslims, citing cases such as a recent dispute in Kolomna over the proposed construction of a mosque. Keston News Service reported on May 4, 2001, that Mufti Ravil Gainutdin complained that a Russian Orthodox Church priest in Kolomna called on the public to oppose construction of the mosque. Discriminatory attitudes have become stronger since the onset of the conflict in Chechnya in 1999. Authorities, journalists, and the public have been quick to label Muslims or Muslim organizations "Wahhabi," a term which has become equivalent with "extremists." For example, NTV reported on March 11, 2001, that Mordovian State University had instituted a careful selection process intended to exclude potential "Wahhabists." The university did not specify what criteria would be used in establishing who fit such a category. Such sentiment has led to a formal ban on "Wahhabism" in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkharia.

A continuing pattern of violence, with either religious or political motivations, against religious workers in the North Caucasus was evident during the period covered by this report. Muslim separatists targeted Russian Orthodox priests for killing in Chechnya. Several Muslim clerics in Chechnya have been killed during the period covered by this report as well, including Magomed Khasuyev, Imam Umar Idrisov, and Imams Mudayev, and Umalatov who were all killed in January 2001.

Jewish emigration rates are significantly lower than in the last years of the Soviet period. The number of Jews emigrating to Israel for economic reasons as well as fear of persecution increased approximately 70 percent in 1998, but has decreased since. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported on March 19, 2001, that the total number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (including Russia) to Israel decreased by 45 percent in the first 10 weeks of 2001, compared to the same period in 2000. According to Mikhail Chlenov, a Russian Jewish leader, the decrease in emigration is attributable to lower stress among the population.

Jews continue to encounter manifestations of societal discrimination. Anti-Semitic acts continue, and human rights groups have called for stronger governmental ac-

tion to counter anti-Semitic acts. In September 2000, a group of extremists attacked a school in Ryazan where Jewish religious and cultural classes were being held, threatening faculty members and vandalizing the premises. By mid-2000 only one individual has been identified as responsible. After being detained briefly, the suspect was released and ostensibly disappeared. Authorities claim the suspect is on the "All Russia Wanted list." Following the incident, anti-Semitic news articles appeared in Ryazan newspapers blaming the Jews themselves for the incident. During the gubernatorial campaign in January, anti-Semitic graffiti appeared around the city. According to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry (UCSJ), which monitors anti-Semitism in the various regions of the country, a punk rock concert held in Tver in March 2001 featured a band "Pagan Reign" who screamed anti-Semitic slogans such as "Beat the Yids! Save Russia!" Several Jewish cemeteries have been vandalized, including the cemeteries in Nizhniy Novgorod and Samara. The Russian news website "lenta.ru" reported on March 19, 2001, that a Samara judge declared Mikhail Pankov, the head of a local group of "Satanists" who were responsible for the vandalism, to be insane and sent him to a psychiatric institution for forced treatment. On April 25, 2001, Glasnost News Service reported that the memorial to Jewish soldiers killed in World War II, that was due to be opened May 9, 2001, in Vladikavkaz, was completely destroyed by unknown vandals.

On May 29, 2001, UCSJ released a special report on anti-Semitism in academia, citing prominent professors and university administration officials in the Altay region, Vladimir, Pskov, and Saint Petersburg who have expressed, either in their publications or in a public forum, anti-Semitic views. The report details how these regional educators and administrators propagate conspiracy theories about Jews and promote negative Jewish stereotypes. Nonetheless, UCSJ acknowledges that such academics represent only a minority.

The ultranationalist and anti-Semitic Russian National Unity (RNE) paramilitary organization, formerly led by Aleksandr Barkashov, appears to have splintered and lost political influence in many regions since its peak in 1998. Although reliable figures on its membership are not available, the RNE claimed a membership of 50,000 in 24 federation chapters in 1999. The RNE continues to be active in some regions, such as Voronezh, and RNE graffiti has appeared in a number of cities, including Krasnodar. The cities of Tver and Nizhniy Novgorod registered "Russian Rebirth," a splinter group of the RNE, which in turn prompted protests from human rights groups including the UCSJ. However, in several regions such as Moscow and Karelia, authorities have successfully limited the activities of the RNE by not registering their local affiliates. Representatives of the Church of Scientology accuse RNE and other ultra-nationalist organizations of violence or threats of violence against their activities in a number of Russian cities, including Nizhny Novgorod, Barnaul, and Ekaterinburg.

Anti-Semitic themes continue to figure in some local publications around the country, unchallenged by local authorities. However, traditionally anti-Semitic publications with large distributions, such as the newspaper *Zavtra*, while still pursuing such anti-Semitic themes as the portrayal of Russian oligarchs as exclusively Jewish, appear to be more careful than in the past about using crude anti-Semitic language.

As so-called "nontraditional" religions in the country continue to grow, many citizens, influenced by negative reports in the mass media and public criticism by Russian Orthodox Church officials and other influential figures, such as anticult activist Aleksandr Dvorkin, continue to feel hostility toward "foreign sects." During the Jubilee Bishops' Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 13–16, 2000, the Church issued a document entitled "Fundamental Principles of the Russian Orthodox Church's Relations with Other Faiths." In the document the Church identifies denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons as proselytizing "cults" whose operations on the "canonical" territory of Russia must be stopped. According to the document, the mission of other "traditional" confessions is possible only under the condition that they refrain from proselytizing or tempting the faithful away from the Church with material goods.

Jewish groups, led by FEOR head Rabbi Berel Lazar, have taken a strong public stance against groups such as "Jews for Jesus," and have coordinated with the Russian Orthodox Church and other groups to fight the spread of so-called "cults" and "foreign missionaries." Activists in Rostov Velikiy picketed the proposed site for the construction of a Jehovah's Witnesses center on April 20, 2001, proclaiming their opposition to "totalitarian cults." Nizhniy Novgorod hosted a conference entitled "Totalitarian Cults: Threat of the XXI Century," which featured a number of presentations from both Russian and foreign "anticult" activists. The conference materials depicted such groups as Pentecostals, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unification Church, and Scientology as "cults," despite the fact that all have legal status.

Members of some religions, including some Protestant groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unification Church, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and the Mormons, continued to face discrimination in their ability to rent premises and conduct group activities (see Section II). In August 2000, a group of extremists attacked members of Jehovah's Witnesses congregation and a Mormon assembly in Volgograd. As of mid-2001, no one had been charged with this crime despite the fact that the victims identified at least one of the suspects. According to Blagovest Info News Agency, on April 17, 2001, an Evangelical church in the Moscow Oblast city of Chekhov was burned to the ground. The incident occurred after a number of threats from "anticult" activists. In the same city, according to NTV, evangelical efforts to show a "Jesus" film in January 2001 were blocked by authorities who first instructed several institutes of culture to cancel an earlier agreement to show the film and, after protests, forbade all public events at the time because of an alleged flu epidemic (other holiday events apparently took place).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has continued to engage the Government, a number of religious denominations and groups, NGO's, and others in a steady dialog on religious freedom. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the Consulates General in Yekaterinburg, St. Petersburg, and Vladivostok have been active throughout the period covered by this report in investigating reports of violations of religious freedom, including anti-Semitic incidents. U.S. Government officials engage a broad range of Russian officials, representatives of religious groups, and human rights activists on a daily basis. These contacts include: government officials; representatives of over 20 religious confessions; the Institute for Religion and Law; the Slavic Law and Justice Center; the "Esther" Legal Information Center; the Anti-Defamation League; lawyers representing religious groups; journalists; academics; and human rights activists known for their commitment to religious freedom.

The Ambassador publicly criticized in the strongest terms the attacks on the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses in Volgograd, as well as the attack on the Ryazan school where Jewish students were studying, calling on the Government for vigorous investigation of these crimes. The Ambassador traveled to Ryazan soon after the latter incident and presided over a roundtable of representatives from different ethnic and religious groups, including the Jewish community, and regional administration officials, to promote discussion of tolerance. The Embassy has worked with NGO's to encourage the development of programs designed to sensitize law enforcement officials and municipal and regional administration officials to discrimination, prejudice, and crimes committed on the basis of ethnic or religious intolerance. Embassy officials have met numerous Russian and American groups affiliated with the many religious denominations present in the country, participating in exchanges of opinion and conducting briefings on the status of religious freedom.

Senior Embassy officials discuss religious freedom with high-ranking officials in the Presidential Administration and the Government (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), raising specific cases of concern. Russian federal officials have responded by investigating those cases and keeping Embassy staff informed on issues they have raised.

The Embassy played a role in resolving visa registration cases of several foreign religious workers of different denominations. The Embassy and consulates also have repeatedly investigated and raised with federal and local authorities problems experienced by individual missionaries, including the refusal of visas or registration. As implementation of the 1997 Religion Law continues, the Embassy maintains frequent contact with working-level officials at the Ministry of Justice, Presidential Administration, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In Washington as well as in Russia, the U.S. Government presses for adherence to international standards of religious freedom in the Russian Federation. Officials in the State Department meet regularly with U.S.-based human rights groups and religious organizations concerned about religious freedom in Russia as well as with visiting Russian representatives of religious organization. The 1997 Law on Religious Freedom has been the subject of numerous high-level communications between members of the executive branch of the U.S. Government and the Russian Government, involving the President, the Vice President, including the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State and other senior U.S. officials. On May 10, 2000, as part of a continuing exchange of information on the status of religious freedom in Russia, senior State Department officials, including Undersecretary for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, together with Senator Gordon Smith and National Security Council Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia, Dan Fried, participated in a round table with representatives of religious communities to examine the state of religious

freedom in Russia. An earlier roundtable had been held in September, 2000. An official of the Office of International Religious Freedom made a presentation in the June 2000 Moscow Conference co-sponsored by the Presidential Administration (see Section III), where she stressed the importance of respecting the rights of minority religions.

SAN MARINO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 37.57 square miles and its population is 26,937. The Government does not provide statistics on the size of religious groups and there is no recent census data providing information on religious membership; however, it is estimated that over 95 percent of the population are Catholic. There are also small groups of Jehovah's Witnesses and adherents to the Baha'i Faith (who organize small, active missionary groups), some Muslims, and members of the Waldesian Church.

There are no private religious schools; the school system is public and is financed by the State. Public schools provide Catholic religious instruction; however, students may choose without penalty not to participate.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Although Roman Catholicism is dominant, it is not the state religion, and the law prohibits discrimination based on religion. The Catholic Church receives direct benefits from the State through income tax revenues as taxpayers may request that 0.3 percent of their income tax payments be allocated to the Catholic Church or to "other" charities, including two religions (the Waldesian Church and members of Jehovah's Witnesses).

In 1993 some parliamentarians objected to the traditional 1909 oath of loyalty sworn on the "Holy Gospels." Although they eventually swore as required, the parliamentarians contended that it violated Article 9 of the European Convention and brought suit in the European Court of Human Rights. Following this objection, Parliament changed the law in 1993 to permit a choice between the traditional oath and one in which the reference to the Gospels was replaced by "on my honor." On February 18, 1999, the European Court found the requirement that Members of Parliament swear their loyalty on the "Holy Gospels" violated religious freedom. However, its ruling also implicitly endorsed the revised 1993 legal formulation. The Court also noted that the traditional ("Holy Gospels") oath still is mandatory for other offices, such as the Captain Regent or a member of the Government; however, to date, no elected Captain Regent or government member has challenged the validity of the 1909 oath.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist between the religious communities, and government and religious officials encourage mutual respect for differences.

Roman Catholicism is not a state religion but it is dominant in society, as most citizens were born and raised under Catholic principles that form part of their culture. These principles still permeate state institutions symbolically; for example, crucifixes may be found hanging on courtroom or government office walls. They also affect societal lifestyles independently of individual compliance with Catholic precepts (such as strictures on divorce).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom. However, anti-Semitism persists among some elements of the population.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The Slovak Republic has a total land area of 18,933 square miles and its population is 5,396,193. There are approximately 3.2 million Roman Catholics who make up 60.4 percent of the population. There are 180,000 Byzantine Catholics (approximately 3.4 percent), 35,000 Orthodox believers (0.7 percent), 333,000 members of the Augsburg Lutheran Church (6.2 percent), and 80,000 members of the Reformed Christian Church (1.7 percent). Approximate membership numbers for the smaller groups are: Jehovah's Witnesses, 22,000; the Baptist Church, 2,500; the Brethren Church, 2,000; Seventh-Day Adventists, 1,700; the Apostolic Church, 1,200; the Evangelical Methodist Church, 1,100; Jewish congregations, 1,500; the Old Catholic Church, 900; the Christian Corps in Slovakia, 700; the Czechoslovak Husite Church, 700; and, according to the 1991 census, 27.2 percent of the population had no religious affiliation.

There are 3 categories of nonregistered religions that comprise about 30 groups: nontraditional religions (Ananda Marga, Hare Krishna, Yoga in Daily Life, Osho, Sahadza Yoga, Shambaola Slovakia, Shri Chinmoy, Zazen International Slovakia, and Zen Centermyo Sahn Sah); the syncretic religious societies (Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, Movement of the Holy Grail, and The Baha'I Faith); and the Christian religious societies (The Church of Christ, Manna Church, International Association of Full Evangelium Traders, Christian Communities, Nazarens, New Revelation, New Apostolic Church, Word of International Life, Society of the Friends of Jesus Christ, Sword of Spirit, Disciples of Jesus Christ, Universal Life, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Free Peoples' Mission).

The number of immigrants is insignificant. There are some very small numbers of refugees who practice different faiths than the majority of native-born citizens. Missionaries do not register with the State and no official statistics exist, although according to government information, there are missionaries from the Roman Catholic, Augsburg Lutheran, and Methodist faiths as well as a Jewish emissary active in the country. From among the nonregistered churches, there are Mormon missionaries.

There is very little correlation between religious differences and ethnic or political differences. The Christian Democratic Party (KDH), which has ties to the Catholic faith, is the only political party with a religious backing. Followers of the Orthodox Church live predominantly in the eastern part of the country near the Ukrainian border. Other religious groups tend to be spread quite evenly across the country.

According to a poll conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences in 1998, the number of practicing believers increased from 73 percent in 1991 to 83 percent in 1998. There was also an increase in the number of those who do not practice any religion, from 9.9 to 16.3 percent. Approximately 54 percent of Catholics and 22 percent of Lutherans actively participate in formal religious services. No more recent polls have been completed.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Constitution provides for the right to practice the religion of one's choice and also provides for the right to change religion or faith, as well as the right to refrain from any religious affiliation. The Government observes and enforces these provisions in practice.

The new Law 308 on Freedom of Religion passed on October 31, 2000, provides for freedom of religion and defines the status of churches and religious groups, including those groups not registered with the Government. It does not prohibit the existence of nontraditional religions. It allows the State to enter agreements with churches and religious communities. This law is applied and enforced in a non-discriminatory fashion.

Governmental entities at all levels, including the courts, interpret the law in a way that protects religious freedom.

No official state religion exists; however, the Catholic Church, the dominant faith in terms of membership, receives significantly larger state subsidies because it is the most populous church. Some independent observers claim that because the Vatican has signed an international treaty with the Government, the Catholic Church is advantaged over other religious groups. However, according to the Culture Ministry, other churches are preparing agreements, as well.

There are several religious holidays that are celebrated as national holidays, including Epiphany, the Day of the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows, All Saints Day, St. Stephens Day, Christmas, and Easter. The treaty that the Government signed with the Vatican prohibits the removal or alteration of existing religious holidays considered as state holidays. However, none of these holidays appear to impact negatively any religious groups.

Registration of churches is not required, but under existing law, only registered churches and religious organizations have the explicit right to conduct public worship services and other activities, although no specific religions or practices are banned or discouraged by the authorities in practice. Those that register receive state benefits including subsidies for clergymen and office expenses. State funding also is provided to church schools and to teachers who lecture on religion in state schools. Occasionally, the State subsidizes one-time projects and significant church activities, and religious societies are partly exempt from paying taxes and import custom fees. A religion may elect not to accept the subsidies. There are 15 officially registered religions.

To register a religion new to the country, a 1991 law requires applicants to submit a list of 20,000 permanent residents who adhere to that religion. There is no case of a religious order being refused registration, and the religions already established before the law passed in 1991 were all exempt from the minimum membership requirement.

There are no specific licensing or registration requirements for foreign missionaries or religious organizations. The law allows all churches and religious communities and enables them to send out their representatives as well as to receive foreign missionaries without limitation. Missionaries neither need special permission to stay in the country, nor are their activities regulated in any way.

There were no cases of religions being denied registration and to our knowledge no religious groups failed to attempt to register because of the belief that their application would not be approved.

The public school curriculum allows students to choose to study religion or ethics from grade five to grade nine. These courses are often taught by religious leaders and the churches themselves are responsible for providing and paying instructors for them. There is a lack of appropriate teachers for certain religions.

The Church Department at the Ministry of Culture oversees relations between church and state. The Church Department manages the distribution of state subsidies to churches and religious associations. However, it cannot intervene in their

internal affairs and does not direct their activities. The Ministry administers a cultural state fund—Pro Slovakia—which, among other things, allocates money to cover the repair of religious monuments. There is a government institute for relations between church and state.

Under the auspices of the government Office for National Minorities and Human Rights, an official agreement was signed between the Government and the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches to conclude property disputes stemming from the Communist and post-World War II eras. Since 1989 the State has promoted inter-faith dialog and understanding by supporting events organized by various churches. The state-supported Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia promotes communication within the religious community. Most Christian churches have the status of members or observers in the Council. The Jewish community was invited, and sends observers, but chose not to participate.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs negotiated a treaty with the Vatican to define the framework of church-state relations and mutual commitments.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. Although Government support is provided in a non-discriminatory way to registered churches that seek it, the requirement that a registered organization have 20,000 members disadvantages some smaller faiths. The Government monitors, although it does not interfere with, religious “cults” and “sects.” Some property restitution cases remain unresolved.

The Institute of State-Church Relations monitors and researches religious cults and sects; however, it is difficult to identify these groups because they largely register as nongovernmental organizations rather than as religious groups. The Institute conducts seminars, issues publications, and provides information to the media regarding its findings.

Law 282/93 on Restitution of Communal Property enabled all churches and religious societies to apply for the return of their property that was confiscated by the Communist government. The deadline for these claims was December 31, 1994. The property was returned in its current condition and the State did not provide any compensation for the damage done to it during the previous regime. The property was returned by the State, by municipalities, by state legal entities, and under certain conditions by private persons. In some cases, the property was returned legally by the State but has not been vacated by the former tenant—often a school or hospital with nowhere else to go. There also have been problems with the return of property that had been undeveloped at the time of seizure but upon which there since has been construction. Churches, synagogues, and cemeteries have been returned, albeit mostly in poor condition. The churches and religious groups often lack the funds to restore these properties to a usable condition. The main obstacles to the resolution of outstanding restitution claims are the Government’s lack of financial resources, due to its austerity program, and bureaucratic resistance on the part of those entities required to vacate restitutable properties.

While the Orthodox Church reported that six of the seven properties on which it had filed claims already had been returned, the Catholic Church and the Federation of Jewish Communities reported lower rates of success. The Catholic Church reported that more than half of the property that it had claimed had been returned to it already. In another 12 percent of cases the property had been returned legally to the Church but typically was occupied by other tenants and would require court action to be returned to church hands. The Church had not received any compensation for the remaining 40 percent of claims since these properties were undeveloped at the time of nationalization but since have been developed. The Church also is not eligible to reacquire lands that originally were registered to church foundations that no longer exist or no longer operate in the country, like the Benedictines.

The Federation of Jewish Communities (FJC) has reported some successful cases of restitution and has only a few pending cases that require resolution. These include cases in which property had been restituted to the FJC but not in usable condition, cases in which the property still is occupied by previous tenants, and lands upon which buildings had been constructed after the seizure of the property.

The FJC is dissatisfied with the Government’s failure to discuss compensation for property that belonged to Jewish families who no longer have living heirs.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On December 15, 2000, the government Office for National Minorities facilitated the signing of an agreement between the Government and the Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches.

A new piece of legislation, Law 308 on Freedom of Religion, passed on October 31, 2000; it provides for freedom of religion and defines the status of churches and religious groups, including those groups not registered with the Government. It does not prohibit the existence of nontraditional religions. It allows the State to enter into agreements with churches and religious communities. This law is applied and enforced in a nondiscriminatory fashion.

In February 2001, the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Judaism undertook a joint educational project on Jewish history and culture that is targeted to elementary and high school teachers of history, civic education, and ethics. This project is intended to assist in educating the public about Jewish themes and increase tolerance toward minorities. Currently the Government is seeking to obtain membership in the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among churches and religious societies are amicable. However, anti-Semitism persists among some elements of the population.

Despite protests by the Federation of Jewish Communities and Slovak National Party members, the official Slovak cultural organization Matica Slovenska continued their efforts to rehabilitate the historical reputation of Jozef Tiso, the leader of the Nazi-collaborationist wartime Slovak state. On March 14, 2001, a marginal nationalist party, Slovak National Unity (SNU), held a rally to commemorate the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the wartime Slovak state. Approximately 100 persons, including a number of skinheads, attended the rally. The police kept the event under tight control to prevent any violence. The chairman of the SNU, Stanislav Panis, in his tribute to Tiso appealed to the Government to make March 14 an official national holiday.

A musical skinhead group called Judenmord (Murder of Jews), has established a Webpage and participated in several concerts in the country as well as in the neighboring Czech Republic. The Jewish community has called on the Government to ban this openly anti-Semitic band, which the Government had not done by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Catholic Church intends to canonize the late Bishop Vajtasak, who was imprisoned after World War II and died as a consequence. Many protest this move, alleging that Vajtasak was a member of the National Council of the wartime pro-Nazi Slovak state and was aware of the deportations of Slovak Jews to Nazi concentration camps. The Jewish community possesses written records indicating that Vajtasak participated in the Government session that approved the deportation of Jews and the decision to pay 500 German marks to the German Government to cover their expenses in Nazi concentration camps.

In late May 2001, unknown culprits desecrated the Jewish cemetery in the central town of Levice for the fourth time in the past 3 years. The Jewish community has appealed to the mayor of Levice to properly investigate this incident.

The Jewish community has complained that a lawsuit against a former editor of publishing house Agres, Martin Savel, who published anti-Semitic literature and the anti-Jewish magazine Voice of Slovakia in the early 1990's, has never been resolved.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

The U.S. Embassy maintains contacts with a broad spectrum of religious groups. The Embassy encourages tolerance for minority religions.

Embassy officers meet with officials of the major religious groups on a regular basis to discuss property restitution issues as well as human rights conditions. Relations with religious groups are friendly and open. The Embassy continued its dialog with the Conference of Bishops, the Federation of Jewish Communities, and the Orthodox Church. The Embassy has good relations with the Ministry of Culture and has fostered an effective dialog between religious groups, the Ministry, and the Commission for the Preservation of U.S. Heritage Abroad on matters of importance to the commission. The Embassy lobbied actively members of the Government to establish the commission to resolve the questions of property without living heirs.

Embassy officers met with the head of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Jan Korec, and the director of the local branch of Amnesty International to discuss human rights concerns, including those of a religious nature. The Embassy organized meetings between official visitors and representatives of religious communities.

Embassy officers have played an active role in assisting in restitution cases involving U.S. citizens and have assisted the Government in its attempts to become a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research and to initiate a liaison project on Holocaust education in cooperation with the Task Force.

SLOVENIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 12,589 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.99 million. Estimates of religious identification vary, but according to the 1991 census, the numbers are: Roman Catholic, 1.4 million (72 percent); No answer, 377,000 (19 percent); Atheist, 85,500 (4.3 percent); Orthodox, 46,000 (2 percent); Muslim, 29,000 (1.5 percent); Protestant, 19,000 (1 percent); Agnostic, 4,000 (.2 percent); and Jewish, 201 (.01 percent).

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

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

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There are 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 recognized as legal entities; to date no groups have been denied registration. The Government proposed an amended Religious Communities Act to Parliament in 1998 that would have offered non-profit status to registered religious communities, but this bill has not yet been adopted.

In 1999, the Government signed an agreement on the legal position of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia with the Bishop's Conference, and concluded a similar agreement in 2000 with the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia. Other religious communities have expressed interest in negotiating similar agreements with the Government.

Religious groups, including foreign missionaries, must register with the Ministry of the Interior if they wish to receive value added tax rebates on a quarterly basis. All groups in the country report equal access to registration and tax rebate status.

The appropriate role for religious instruction in the schools continues to be an issue of debate. The Constitution states that parents are entitled to give their children "a moral and religious upbringing." Before 1945 religion was much more prominent in the schools, but now only those schools supported by religious bodies teach religion.

The Roman Catholic Church was a major property holder in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before World War II. After the war, much Church property—church buildings

and support buildings, residences, businesses, and forests—was confiscated and nationalized by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

After Slovenian independence in 1991, Parliament passed legislation calling for denationalization (restitution and/or compensation) within a fixed period. The first post-independence government in 1991 was a center-right coalition headed by a Christian Democrat prime minister. However, a subsequent change of government in 1992 to a center-left coalition led by current Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek led to a virtual standstill in denationalization proceedings for several years. The strong opposition of the current Government to returning large tracts of forest and other property to the Catholic Church is a frequently cited reason for the paralysis of the denationalization process. As of mid-2001, over one-half of all cases had been adjudicated at the initial administrative level. Restitution of church property is a politically unpopular issue, and the Catholic Church, despite its numerical predominance, does not have the political support necessary to force a faster pace for denationalization.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Societal attitudes toward religion are complex. Historical events dating long before Slovene independence color societal perceptions of the dominant Catholic Church. Much of the gulf between the (at least nominally) Catholic center-right and the largely agnostic or atheistic left stems from the massacre of large numbers of alleged Nazi and Fascist collaborators in the years 1946–48. 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 prominent Catholics.

Interfaith relations are correct, although there is little warmth between the majority Catholic Church and foreign missionary groups, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which are viewed as aggressive proselytizers.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has discussed worldwide religious freedom in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy has held extensive discussions with the Government on the topic of property denationalization in the context of the rule of law, although it has not specifically discussed church property during these sessions.

SPAIN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion; however, the Catholic Church enjoys some privileges unavailable to other faiths.

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 relationships among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 194,897 square miles, and its population is an estimated 40 million.

The Roman Catholic Church maintains that 93.63 percent of citizens are declared Catholics. However, many persons argue that this figure is based on numbers of baptisms, weddings, and first communions; events that are essentially social rites

practiced by many who do not attend church regularly or believe in Catholic teachings. According to a survey published in April 2000 by the Center for Sociological Investigations, 83.6 percent of citizens consider themselves Catholics, 2 percent followers of other religions, 7.9 percent nonbelievers, and 4 percent atheists. The Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities represents 350,000 Spanish Protestants, but estimates that there are 800,000 foreign Protestants, mostly European, who reside in the country at least 6 months per year. The Federation of Spanish Islamic Entities (FEERI), located in Cordoba, estimates that there are more than 450,000 Muslims, not counting illegal immigrants (who could number a quarter million). There are approximately 25,000 Jews registered with the major Jewish organization. However, 50,000 persons attend Jewish religious services in 13 of the country's 17 regions. There are 3,000 Buddhists registered, but according to their president, there are 3 times that many in practice.

There are 11,081 entities created by the Catholic Church in the first section of the Register of Religious Entities, and 570 non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities. The second section of the register, called the general section, contains non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities that do not have an agreement with the State, and their creations. There are 329 entities in this section. The third section contains canonical foundations of the Catholic Church. There are 153 entries in this section.

There are 899 non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities in the register. These include 747 Protestant church entities, which have 1,643 places of worship. These include: Charismatics—89 entities and 113 places of worship; Assemblies of Brothers—120 entities and 143 places of worship; Baptists—213 entities and 247 places of worship; Pentecostals—64 entities and 259 places of worship; Presbyterians—36 entities and 58 places of worship; one entity of the Evangelical Church of Philadelphia, which has 613 places of worship; Church of Christ—9 entities and 19 places of worship; the Salvation Army—1 entity and 9 places of worship; Anglicans—17 entities and 26 places of worship; interdenominational churches and entities—60 entities and 13 places of worship; Churches for Attention to Foreigners—25 entities and 9 places of worship; Adventists—3 entities and 76 places of worship; and other evangelical churches—106 entities and 53 places of worship. In addition, there are also: Orthodox—5 entities and 5 places of worship; Christian Scientists—3 entities and no places of worship; Jehovah's Witnesses—1 entity and 873 places of worship; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints—1 entity and 30 places of worship; Unification Church—1 entity and 1 place of worship; other Christian confessions—10 entities and 29 places of worship; Judaism—15 entities and 15 places of worship; Islam—99 entities and 45 places of worship; Baha'i Faith—2 entities and 12 places of worship; Hinduism—3 entities and no places of worship; Buddhism—13 entities and 13 places of worship; and other confessions—3 entities and 12 places of worship.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The 1978 Constitution, which declares the country to be a secular state, and various laws provide that no religion should have the character of a state religion. However, the Government treats religions in different ways. Catholicism is the dominant religion, and enjoys the closest official relationship with the Government. The relationship is defined by four 1979 accords between Spain and the Holy See, covering economic, religious education, military, and judicial matters. Among the various benefits enjoyed by the Catholic Church is financing through the tax system. Payments in 2000 amounted to approximately \$10 million. Jews, Muslims, and Protestants have official status through bilateral agreements, but enjoy fewer privileges. Other recognized religions, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), are covered by constitutional protections but have no special agreements with the Government.

The Organic Law of Religious Freedom of 1980 implements the constitutional provision for freedom of religion. The 1980 law establishes a legal regime and certain privileges for religious organizations. To enjoy the benefits of this regime, religious organizations must be entered in the Register of Religious Entities maintained by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. The register was established in 1981 and is updated regularly. To register with the Ministry of Justice, religious groups must submit documentation supporting their claim to be

religions. If a group's application is rejected, it may appeal the decision to the courts. If it is judged not to be a religion, it may be included on a Register of Associations maintained by the Ministry of Interior. Inclusion on the Register of Associations grants legal status as authorized by the law regulating the right of association. Religions not officially recognized, such as the Church of Scientology, are treated as cultural associations.

The Catholic Church does not have to register with the Ministry of Justice's religious entities list; however, some entities do register for financial or other reasons. The first section of the Register of Religious Entities, called the special section, contains a list of religious entities created by the Catholic Church and a list of non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities that have an agreement on cooperation with the State. In 1992 agreements on cooperation with the State were signed by three organizations on behalf of Protestants, Jews, and Muslims; the organizations were the Federation of Evangelical Entities of Spain (FEREDE), the Federation of Israelite Communities of Spain (FCIE), and the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE).

Religion courses are offered in public schools but are not mandatory. The Catholic Church and other religious entities support religious schools.

Foreign missionaries proselytize in the country.

National religious holidays include Epiphany (January 6), Holy Thursday and Good Friday, Assumption (August 15), All Saints Day (November 1), Immaculate Conception (December 8), and Christmas (December 25); some communities celebrate local religious holidays. National religious holidays do not have a negative impact on other religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Leaders of the Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish communities report that they continue to press the Government for comparable privileges to those enjoyed by the Catholic Church. Their list of concerns includes public financing, expanded tax exemptions, improved media access, and fewer restrictions on opening new places of worship.

Before allowing entry by any religious figures other than Catholic army chaplains into military barracks the Defense Ministry requires soldiers to declare their non-Catholic religious affiliation. The State funds Catholic chaplains who serve in hospitals.

The government income tax form includes a box that allows taxpayers to assign 0.5239 percent of their taxes to the Catholic Church. Protestant and Muslim leaders would like their communities to receive government support, through an income tax allocation or other designation.

The Jewish community wants to receive financial support from the Government, but does not want to be included in the check-box list on the income tax form. This reticence is attributed to the community's past history, which included persecution and expulsion from the country in 1492. The Jewish community is seeking a one-time payment to ensure all congregations have the religious necessities (synagogue, cemetery, and school), as well as an annual subsidy to maintain this religious patrimony. The Jewish community also wants the Government to resolve problems associated with Jewish cemeteries. (Under the law, land for cemeteries is not granted in perpetuity, in the expectation that cemeteries may be moved and the land developed for urban uses if the need arises.)

In May 1999, the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament approved a nonbinding resolution calling on the Government to reinforce measures against the activity of destructive "sects" in the country and to create a permanent organization to monitor these organizations. Press reports cited the Interior Ministry as stating that there were 200 destructive sects in the country, which have between 100,000 and 150,000 members. The Law of Sects in Spain, passed in 1989, authorizes the police to investigate sects with a destructive character. As a result, a special unit was created within the police to investigate allegedly destructive sects.

The Government of the Canary Islands, one of Spain's 17 regions, has refused to grant permission to the Salvation Army to open a center for needy children, on the grounds that the Salvation Army is a "destructive sect."

In early April 1999, the Helsinki Human Rights Federation presented a report to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that included criticism of the country for failing to implement its commitment in the 1994 Budapest Document on freedom of religion and conscience. The report criticized the country for discrimination against "new religions," which often are considered by authorities to be dangerous and destructive, while older, established religions continue to receive financial and other privileges from the State.

Representatives of the Church of Scientology assert that the open indictment against Scientology International President Heber Jentzsch is religiously based, a claim denied by Spanish officials. The charges against Jentzsch relate to a fraud case arising from private complaints against Scientology offices Dianetica and Narconon. Police arrested Jentzsch and 71 others at a 1988 Madrid convention held by the International Association of Scientologists. Jentzsch was subsequently released on bail and returned to the United States. The current indictment, issued in 1994, charges Jentzsch and 20 Spanish citizens with 16 counts including illicit association, tax evasion, and crimes against the public health. The trial of the defendants other than Jentzsch began in Madrid in March 2001.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In February 2001, the Constitutional Court ruled that the Unification Church should be added to the Register of Religious Entities. The Unification Church had applied for registration in 1991 and was denied in 1992 by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs. Lower court rulings in 1993 and 1996 had upheld the denial. On May 4, 2001, the Ministry of Justice added the Church to the Register of Religious Institutions.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationships among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials met with religious leaders of a number of denominations during the period covered by this report.

SWEDEN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Church of Sweden, formerly the state church, effectively became separated from the State in 1999; however, it still receives some state support.

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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 173,732 square miles and its population is an estimated 8.8 million.

Approximately 84 percent of the population belong to the Church of Sweden. It is possible to leave the state church, and an increasing number of persons do. In 1998 13,233 persons left the state church. In 1999 when the state church and the Government separated, a record 33,299 persons left and an estimated 16,000 persons departed in 2000.

There are about 165,000 Roman Catholics. The Orthodox Church has approximately 100,000 members, and the main national Orthodox churches are Greek, Serbian, Syrian, Romanian, Estonian, and Finnish. There also is a large Finnish-speaking Lutheran denomination. While weekly services in Christian houses of worship generally are poorly attended, a large number of persons observe major festivals of the ecclesiastical year and prefer a religious ceremony to mark the turning points of life. About 78 percent of children are baptized, 50 percent of all those eligible are

confirmed, and 90 percent of funeral services are performed under the auspices of the state church. Approximately 62 percent of couples marrying choose a Church of Sweden ceremony.

There is a relatively large number of smaller church bodies. Several are offshoots of 19th century revival movements in the Church of Sweden. Others, such as the Baptist Union of Sweden and the Methodist Church of Sweden, trace their roots to British and North American revival movements.

There are approximately 17,000 Jews, of whom 8,500 are active members of a congregation. There are Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jewish synagogues. Large numbers of Jews attend high holiday services but attendance at weekly services is low. The number of Muslims has increased rapidly in recent years to between 250,000 and 300,000 followers. Mosques are being built in many parts of the country. The Shi'a and Sunni branches of Islam are represented among immigrant groups. Around 100,000 of the Muslims in the country are active religiously. Buddhists and Hindus number around 3,000 to 4,000 persons each. Although no reliable statistics are available, it is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the adult population are atheist.

The major religious communities and the state church are spread across the country. Large numbers of immigrants in recent decades have led to the introduction of nontraditional religions in those communities populated by immigrants.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and other foreign missionary groups are active in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The rights and freedoms enumerated in the Constitution include freedom of worship, protection from compulsion to make known one's religious views, and protection from compulsion to belong to a religious community.

The country has maintained a state (Lutheran) church for several hundred years, supported by a general "church tax," although the Government routinely grants any request by a taxpayer for exemption from the tax. All churches receive state financial support.

In 1995 after decades of discussion, the state church and the Government agreed to a formal separation. This reform came into effect in 2000; however, the Church still is to receive some state support.

Foreign missionary groups do not face special requirements.

The Office of the Ombudsman Against Ethnic Discrimination investigates claims by individuals or groups of discrimination "due to race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, or religion." For many years the Government has supported the activities of groups working to combat anti-Semitism.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding and meets annually with representatives from various religious groups. The Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities (SST) is a government body. It cooperates with the Swedish Free Church Council. SST members are selected by religious bodies, which are entitled to some forms of state financial assistance.

Religious education is part of an overall time schedule for compulsory course work in public schools, but is not limited to instruction in the state religion.

The law permits official institutions, such as government ministries and Parliament, to provide copies of documents that are filed with them to the public, although such documents may be unpublished and protected by copyright law. This is due to a contradiction between the Constitution's freedom of information provisions and the country's international obligations to protect unpublished copyrighted works. This contradiction has affected copyrighted, unpublished documents belonging to the Church of Scientology that have been made available to the public by the Parliament in accordance with domestic legislation. The Government is in the process of drafting new legislation designed to eliminate the contradiction and protect copyrights.

In January 1998, the Government began a national Holocaust education project after a public opinion poll found that a low percentage of school children had basic knowledge about the Holocaust. Approximately 1 million copies of the education project's core textbook (available at no cost to every household with children, including in the most prevalent immigrant languages) are in circulation. The Government initiated an intergovernmental multinational Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, to combat anti-Semitism,

racism, and intolerance by placing international political support behind efforts to teach about the Holocaust. Eight other countries, including the United States, are members of the Task Force. In January 2000, the Government established January 27, the anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation, as a national day of remembrance.

In 1998 the Government published a report by a commission of experts entitled "In Good Faith—Society and New Religious Movements." The report sought to gauge the needs of persons leaving new religious movements for support from the national community. It paid special attention to the needs of children. According to the commission, each year approximately 100 persons seek assistance for various medical, legal, social, economic, or spiritual difficulties arising from their departure from new religious movements. The commission recommended passage of legislation making "improper influence" (such as forcing an individual to renounce his or her faith, or other such "manipulation") a punishable offense. The commission's proposal for legislation required further investigation by the Government. The commission also proposed the establishment of a foundation for the study of questions of belief and to help build bridges between new religious movements and mainstream society.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

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

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Citizens are tolerant of diverse religions practiced in the country, including the Mormon faith and Scientology; however, there is limited anti-Semitism, which occasionally manifests itself in the vandalization of synagogues with graffiti and in threatening letters. There were no cases of anti-Semitic vandalism reported in 1999 or 2000. Some immigrant groups have experienced discrimination or violence due to their ethnic background or race. The Government criticizes such practices and prosecutes offenders.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government is a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. In January 2000, former Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat led the U.S. delegation to the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, and former President Clinton addressed the forum in a videotaped message.

SWITZERLAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 19,870 square miles (41,284 square kilometers) and its population is an estimated 7.21 million.

Approximately 95 percent of the population traditionally have been split evenly between Protestant churches and the Catholic Church. Since the 1980's, there has been a trend of persons, primarily Protestants, formally renouncing their church membership. According to the 1990 census, the percentage of the total population

not belonging to a religious group has risen to 7 percent, up from 4 percent 10 years earlier. Membership in religious denominations is as follows: 46 percent Roman Catholic, 40 percent Protestant, 2 percent Muslim, 1 percent Orthodox, and 1 percent unknown/undecided. Other denominations account for trace percentages of less than one percent. There are 58,500 persons belonging to other Christian groups, 29,175 belonging to new religious movements, 17,577 Jews, and 11,748 Old Catholics.

Muslims have grown to at least 200,000 persons, fueled by the influx of Yugoslav refugees in recent years. Muslims practice their religion throughout the country. Although only two mosques exist—in Zurich and Geneva—there have been no reports of difficulties in Muslims buying or renting space to worship. Although occasional complaints arise, such as a Muslim employee not being given time to pray during the workday, attitudes generally are tolerant toward Muslims, who constitute the country's largest non-Christian minority.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Religious liberty is protected by Article 15 of the Constitution, which grants freedom of creed and conscience, and by Article 261bis in the Federal Criminal Code, which prohibits any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or of any religious adherents.

In a June 10, 2001 referendum, voters approved by a two-thirds majority the deletion of a requirement that the Federal Government expressly consent to the establishment of any new Catholic diocese in the country. The requirement, originally designed to preserve religious peace among the country's religious communities, was imposed in 1874 following the unsuccessful attempt of Pope Pius IX to establish a Catholic diocese in the reformist (Protestant) city of Geneva a year earlier. Since the article no longer served its original purpose and, in fact, discriminated against the Catholic Church, the Federal Government called on the electorate to abolish it.

There is no official state church. However, all of the cantons financially support at least one of the three traditional denominations—Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, or Protestant—with funds collected through taxation. Each of the 26 states (cantons) has its own regulations regarding the relationship between church and state. In all cantons an individual may choose not to contribute to church taxes. However, in some cantons private companies are unable to avoid payment of the church tax. A religious organization must register with the Government in order to receive tax-exempt status. There have been no reports of a nontraditional religious group applying for the “church taxation” status that the traditional three denominations enjoy.

Groups of foreign origin are free to proselytize. Groups such as Young Life, Youth for Christ, the Church of Scientology, Youth With a Mission, the Salvation Army, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Islamic Call are active in the country. Experts estimate that between 300 to 800 denominations and groups are established throughout the country.

Foreign missionaries must obtain a “religious worker” visa to work in the country. Requirements include proof that the foreigner would not displace a citizen from doing the job, that the foreigner would be financially supported by the host organization, and that the country of origin of religious workers also grants visas to Swiss religious workers. Youth “interns” may qualify for special visas as well.

Religion is taught in public schools. The doctrine presented depends on which religion predominates in the particular state. However, those of different faiths are free to attend classes for their own creeds during the class period. Atheists are not required to attend the classes. Parents also may send their children to private schools or teach their children at home.

In response to the issue of Holocaust era assets, the Government and private sector initiated a series of measures designed to shed light on the past, provide assistance to Holocaust victims, and address claims to dormant accounts in Swiss banks. These measures include: The Independent Commission of Experts under Professor Jean-Francois Bergier, charged with examining the country's wartime history and its role as a financial center; the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons under Paul Volcker, charged with resolving the issue of dormant World War II era accounts in Swiss banks; and the Swiss Special Fund for Needy Holocaust Victims, which received approximately \$190 million (273 million Swiss francs) in contribu-

tions from the private sector and the Swiss National bank. A \$1.25 billion settlement of the class action lawsuit filed in the U.S. against Swiss banks was announced in August 1998, completed in January 1999, and formally approved on July 26, 2000.

The debate over the country's World War II record contributed to the problem of anti-Semitism (see Section III). The Federal Council took action to address the problem of anti-Semitism. In December 1999, the Council reiterated a statement of regret first made in 1997 over the country's failures to assist minorities fleeing the Nazi regime. In December 1999, the Federal Council (Cabinet) announced the creation of a Center for Tolerance in Bern. Planning for the center under the chairmanship of a former parliamentarian is continuing, and financing will come from the public and private sectors. The Center plans to produce curricula material to address the roots of racism, provide exhibits designed to teach historical lessons, offer academic research opportunities, and host international symposia.

The Government does not initiate interfaith activities.

Of the country's 16 largest political parties, only three—the Evangelical People's Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Christian Social Party—subscribe to a religious philosophy. There have been no reports of individuals being excluded from a political party because of their religious beliefs. Some groups have organized their own parties, such as the Transcendental Meditation Maharishi's Party of Nature and the Argentinean Guru's Humanistic Party. However, none of these have gained enough of a following to win political representation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Due to increasing concern over certain groups, the Government in 1997 asked an advisory commission to examine the Church of Scientology. The commission's 1998 report concluded that there was no basis for special monitoring of the Church, since it did not represent any direct or immediate threat to the security of the country. However, the report stated that the Church had characteristics of a totalitarian organization and had its own intelligence network. The commission also warned of the significant financial burden imposed on Church of Scientology members and recommended reexamining the issue at a later date. In December 2000, the Federal Department of Police published a follow-up report, which concluded that the activities of such groups, including Scientology, had not significantly altered since the first report and that their special monitoring was thus not justified.

In 1998 the city of Basel passed a law banning aggressive tactics for handing out flyers. This action was prompted by complaints about Scientologists' methods. In June 1999, the Church of Scientology suffered a setback when it failed in the country's highest court to overturn a municipal law that barred persons from being approached on the street by those using "deceptive or dishonest methods." The Court ruled that a 1998 Basel law, prompted by efforts to curb Scientology, involved an intervention in religious freedom but did not infringe on it.

The city of Buchs, St. Gallen, also has passed a law modeled on the Basel law. However, it is still legal to proselytize in nonintrusive ways, such as through public speaking on the street or by going door-to-door in neighborhoods.

In June 1995 in Zurich, Scientologists appealed a city decision that prohibited them from distributing flyers on public property. In a qualified victory for the Scientologists, a higher court decided in September 1999 that the Scientologists' activities were commercial and not religious, and that the city should grant them and other commercial enterprises such as fast food restaurants more freedom to distribute flyers on a permit basis. Fearing a heavy administrative and enforcement workload, the city appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court rejected the appeal in June 2000, reinforcing the decision by the previous court that the Scientologists' activities were commercial in nature. The Supreme Court decision is expected to establish a nationwide legal guideline on the issue.

In Winterthur city, authorities require Scientologists to apply for an annual permit to sell their books on public streets. The permit limits their activities to certain areas and certain days. This practice has been in effect since 1995 when a district court upheld fines issued to Scientologists by the city for accosting passersby to invite them onto their premises to sell them books and conduct personality tests. The court ruled that the Scientologists' activities were primarily commercial, rather than religious, which required them to get an annual permit for the book sale on public property and prohibited them from distributing flyers or other advertising material. The Supreme Court ruling in the Zurich case is expected to set a precedent for this case as well.

The European Court of Human Rights upheld the Canton of Geneva's legal prohibition of a Muslim primary school teacher from wearing a headscarf in the classroom. In its verdict handed down on February 15, 2001, the Court ruled that the

Geneva regulations do not violate the articles on religious freedom and non-discrimination of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court found that the legal provisions did not discriminate against the religious convictions of the complainant, but were meant to protect the rights of other subjects as well as the public order.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

In the context of discussions over Nazi gold and Holocaust era assets, anti-Semitic slurs reportedly still remain a problem, although there was no marked increase over the previous year. Government officials, including the President, have spoken frequently and publicly against anti-Semitism. According to the 2000 Swiss National Security Report, between 1995—when the antiracism law was enacted—and December 2000, 149 cases were brought to court under the antiracism law, with 68 convictions. Of those, 19 persons were convicted for anti-Semitism, 15 for revisionism (i.e., denying, doubting, or qualifying the Holocaust), 31 for racist oral or written slurs, and 3 for other reasons.

In November 1998, the Federal Commission Against Racism released a report on anti-Semitism expressing concern that the recent controversy over the country's role during World War II had to some extent contributed to increased expressions of latent anti-Semitism. At the same time, the Commission described the emergence of strong public opposition to anti-Semitism and credited the Federal Council with taking a "decisive stand" against anti-Semitism. The Commission also proposed various public and private measures to combat anti-Semitism and encourage greater tolerance and understanding.

In response the Federal Council committed itself to intensify efforts to combat anti-Semitic sentiment and racism. The Federal Council welcomed the publicly funded Bergier Commission report in December 1999 that disclosed the country's World War II record on turning away certain refugees fleeing from Nazi oppression, including Jewish applicants. The Federal Council described the publication of the Bergier Report as an occasion for reflection and discussion of the country's World War II history. The Federal Council took action to address the problem of anti-Semitism (see Section II).

In March 2000, a Geneva research group released a survey in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee in New York, stating that anti-Semitic views are held by 16 percent of citizens. Other prominent survey firms, as well as some Jewish leaders, disputed the accuracy of the Geneva firm's survey, stating that the survey overestimated the prevalence of anti-Semitic views. According to the survey, 33 percent of Swiss People's Party (SVP) supporters voiced anti-Semitic views. However, the survey found that 92 percent of all Swiss youth rejected anti-Semitic notions. The survey reflected some inconsistencies. For example, during the recent period of controversy over the country's World War II record, public opinion in support of the country's antiracism laws actually strengthened.

Many nongovernmental organizations coordinate interfaith events throughout the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with both Government officials and representatives of the various faiths.

TAJIKISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

There was no change in the overall status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Government policies reflect a pervasive fear of Is-

lamic fundamentalism, a fear shared by much of the general population. The Government monitors the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political. Members of the organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, who overstep this boundary, are subject to arrest and imprisonment for subversion. The Government, including President Imomali Rahmonov, continued to enunciate a policy of active “secularism,” which it tends to define in antireligious rather than nonreligious terms.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, a small number of religious extremists who are not representative of the general population are believed to be behind several church bombings. Some mainstream Muslim leaders occasionally have expressed concern that minority religious groups undermine national unity.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 55,300 square miles and its population is about 6.4 million. An estimated 95 percent of the citizens consider themselves Muslims, although the degree of religious observance varies widely. Only an estimated 10 to 15 percent regularly follow Muslim practices (such as daily prayer and dietary restrictions) or attend services at mosques. The number of Muslims who fast during the holy month of Ramadan continued to increase; up to 99 percent of Muslims in the countryside and over 66 percent in the cities fasted during the latest month of Ramadan. About 3 percent of all Muslims are Ismailis; most of them reside in the remote Gorno-Badakhshan region as well as certain districts of the southern Khatlon region and in Dushanbe. The rest of the Muslim population is Sunni.

There are approximately 230,000 Christians, mostly ethnic Russians and other Soviet-era immigrant groups. The largest Christian group is Russian Orthodox, but there are also Baptists (five registered organizations), Roman Catholics (two registered organizations), Seventh-Day Adventists (one registered organization), Korean Protestants (one registered organization), Lutherans (no data on registration), and Jehovah’s Witnesses (one registered organization). Other religious minorities are very small and include Baha’is (four registered organizations), Zoroastrians (no data on registered organizations), Hare Krishna (one registered organization), and Jews (one registered organization).

Each of these groups probably totals less than 1 percent of the population. The overwhelming majority of these groups live in the capital or other large cities.

Christian missionaries from Western nations, Korea, India, and other countries are present, but their numbers are quite small. Current estimates put the number of recent Christian converts at approximately 2,000 persons.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions, and the Government monitors the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political. Members of the organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, who overstep this boundary, are subject to arrest and imprisonment for subversion.

According to the Law on Religion and Religious Organizations, religious communities must be registered by the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers, which monitors the activities of Muslim groups, the Russian Orthodox Church, and possibly other religious establishments. While the official reason given to justify registration is to ensure that religious groups act in accordance with the law, the practical purpose is to ensure that they do not become overly political. In 1997 the Council of the Islamic Center was subordinated to the Committee on Religious Affairs. This move took place quietly, and with no apparent objection from the observant Muslim community.

More than 5,000 mosques are estimated to be open for daily prayers, although the Government’s Committee on Religious Affairs no longer registers them or keeps records on their number. In addition, 237 so-called “Friday mosques” (large facilities built for Friday prayers) are registered with the Committee on Religious Affairs. These figures do not include Ismaili places of worship because complete data were unavailable.

Regularly throughout the period, covered by this report President Imomali Rahmonov strongly defended “secularism,” which in the Tajik political context is a highly politicized term that carries the strong connotation—likely understood both

by the President and his audience—of being “antireligious” rather than “nonreligious.” The President also occasionally criticized Islam as a political threat. While the vast majority of citizens, including members of the Government, consider themselves Muslims and are not anti-Islamic, there is a pervasive fear of Islamic fundamentalism among both progovernment forces and much of the population at large.

A 1998 law prohibits the creation of political parties with a religious orientation. The former United Tajik Opposition (UTO), the largest component of which was the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), along with international organizations and foreign governments, strongly criticized the law for violating the June 1997 peace agreement, which included a government commitment to lift the ban on member parties of the UTO. The post independence 1992–97 civil war was fought in part over differing views of the role of religion in the republic. In June 1998, President Rahmonov established a Special Conciliation Commission to resolve the dispute, which later reported that it had devised compromise language for the law banning parties from receiving support from religious institutions. A new version of the law, including the compromise language, was passed in the November 1998 parliamentary session. A 1999 constitutional amendment states that the State is secular and that citizens may be members of parties formed on a religious basis. Two representatives from a religiously oriented party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, were members in the lower house of the national Parliament during the period covered by this report.

Although there is no official state religion, the Government has declared two Islamic holidays, Id Al-Fitr and Idi Qurbon, as state holidays. These holidays do not negatively affect any religious groups.

There are small private publishers that publish Islamic materials without serious problems. There is no restriction on the distribution or possession of the Koran, the Bible, or other religious works. The Islamic Renaissance Party, a religiously oriented party, continued to publish its official newspaper, *Najot* (founded in 1999), although it lost access to government-owned printing presses for several months during the summer of 2000, apparently for political reasons. The party also began publishing *Naison*, a magazine for women, in May 2001. In addition, in May 2001, the Union of Islamic Scientists of Tajikistan began publishing the weekly journal *Chashmandoz*.

Privately owned mass-circulation newspapers regularly published articles explaining Islamic beliefs and practices.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Missionaries of registered religious groups are not restricted legally and proselytize openly. There were no reports of harassment of such groups, but neither are missionaries particularly welcomed. The Government’s fear of Islamic terrorists prompts it to restrict visas for Muslim missionaries. There was evidence of an unofficial ban on foreign missionaries who are perceived as extreme Islamic fundamentalists.

Aside from the registration requirement, there are few official constraints on religious practice; however, government officials sometimes issue extrajudicial restrictions. For example, the mayor of Dushanbe prohibited mosques from using loudspeakers for the 5-times-daily call to prayer, and during the period covered by this report, similar restrictions were initiated in the southern Khatlon and northern Soghd regions. There are also reports that some local officials have forbidden members of the Islamic Renaissance Party to speak in mosques in their region. However, this restriction is more a reflection of political rather than religious differences. In Isfara following allegations that a private Arabic language school was hosting a suspected Uzbek terrorist, the authorities imposed restrictions on private Arabic language schools (to include restrictions on private Islamic instruction). Such restrictions appear to be based on political concerns, but restrictive on private religious instruction.

In early 2000, an unregistered Baptist congregation in Dushanbe was informed that it was required to register with the Government, but the Baptists refused on the grounds that they are a branch of the larger All-Baptist Churches, an organization of Baptist churches from throughout the former Soviet Union. They argued that only their leadership in Moscow has the right to register with a government authority. Proceedings began against the Baptist congregation in March 2000 and the court fined the congregation a little more than 50 cents (1,000 Tajik rubles). The congregation refuses to pay as a matter of principle. There have been some instances of petty harassment of the congregation, with the militia on at least one occasion taking down the sign outside the congregation’s building. There were no further reports of harassment during the period covered by this report.

In the spring of 2001, there were reports that local authorities in the city of Qurghanteppa (also, Kurgan-Tyube) prevented a Christian church from registering.

Government-imposed restrictions on the number of pilgrims allowed to undertake the Hajj continued. However, individuals ultimately were permitted, to use private vehicles. In addition, pilgrims were allowed to travel to Mecca and Medina by bus from Mashhad, Iran. There were regional quotas on the number of pilgrims, permitted to undertake the Hajj, which led to increased corruption as places were sold. The motivation for quotas and other restrictions appears to be profit (maximizing bribes from Hajj pilgrims), rather than discouraging a religious practice.

Government publishing houses are prohibited from publishing anything in Arabic script; they do not publish religious literature. However, in 1998 the President initiated a project to publish a Tajik version of the Koran in both Cyrillic and Arabic script, which were printed in Iran and sold through the Iranian bookshop in Dushanbe.

Members of the Baha'i community occasionally were confronted by the police guard outside Dushanbe's Baha'i Center and asked why they had forsaken Islam. Others were called in by the Ministry of Security and asked why they had changed religious affiliation.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government detained numerous members of the Islamist organization, Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Emancipation) in the northern, primarily ethnic Uzbek, Leninobod district and imprisoned some of them. These measures were primarily a reaction to the political agenda that the Government attributes to this organization. According to a press account, over 50 of the Hizb ut-Tahrir organization's members were arrested between January and April 2000 and 1 member reportedly died in police custody. Courts sentenced 57 of these persons to between 1 and 2 years imprisonment. At least two of the detainees reportedly were charged with disseminating subversive literature and planning to overthrow the Government. Although there is no direct information on what grounds the others were charged, they probably were charged with subversive activities. In addition, it is probable, but not confirmed, that between 120 and 150 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir were arrested and sentenced to 5 to 15 years imprisonment. Although Islam is an essential element of the organization's makeup, the Government's hostility toward it appears to be motivated more by its political than by its religious goals. This organization is linked with an organization of the same name in Uzbekistan that calls for the creation of a Muslim caliphate in the country and has become a target of repression by the Uzbek Government, which has accused its members of acting against the constitutional order and of belonging to an extremist group.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Conflict between different religious groups is virtually unknown, in part because there are so few non-Muslims. However, some Muslim leaders occasionally have expressed concern that minority religious groups undermine national unity.

Terrorists bombed a Protestant church in Dushanbe in October 2000, killing seven persons and injuring many more. Government authorities later announced that several Islamic students had been arrested for the attack. The students reportedly confessed to the bombing; their apparent motive was religious. Specifically, they opposed foreign missionaries converting Tajik Muslims to Christianity. According to government authorities, the perpetrators were acting on their own and were not affiliated with either the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or Hizb ut-Tahrir. In December 2000, two churches in Dushanbe, a Russian Orthodox church and a Seventh-Day Adventists' church were bombed. There were no injuries at either church, both of which were closed at the time of the bombing. Three persons were accused of the bombings; two persons were tried and one person reportedly escaped during the period covered by this report.

The small Baha'i community normally does not experience prejudice, but a prominent 88-year-old leader of the community was killed in his home in Dushanbe in September 1999. Members of the Baha'i community believe that he was killed because of his religion, since none of his personal possessions were taken from the murder scene. Police have made no arrests, but militant Islamists aligned with Iran

are considered likely perpetrators. There were no new developments on this case during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Through public diplomacy, the U.S. Embassy has supported programs designed to create a better understanding of how democracies address the issue of secularism and religious freedom. Several participants in these programs are key members of the opposition who, through their writings and their debate on the definition of secularism, reveal a more sophisticated understanding of the concept and of how secularism and religious activism can coexist in a free society.

TURKEY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government imposes some restrictions on religious minorities and on religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities.

There was no significant change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, extremist groups or individuals target minority communities from time to time. Some Christians and Baha'is faced social and government harassment, including detentions for alleged proselytizing or unauthorized meetings. A Muslim cleric was arrested in June 2001 for insulting the Government, holding an illegal religious meeting, and wearing prohibited religious clothing. A Syriac Christian priest stood trial in December 2000, but was acquitted in April 2001 for statements made in October 2000 "that incited enmity" concerning Armenian genocide claims. An intense debate continues over the government ban on wearing Muslim religious dress in state facilities, including universities. The Government, especially the National Security Council (NSC), continued to press for measures to combat "Islamic fundamentalism" or "reactionism" and sought to punish the prominent leader of an Islamic religious community for alleged anti-state behavior. After 2 years of considering the matter, in June 2001, the Constitutional Court closed the Islamist-led Fazilet (Virtue) party, the country's largest opposition political group, for antisecular activities and expelled two of its members from Parliament.

The U.S. Government frequently discusses religious freedom issues with the Turkish Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 301,394 square miles and its population is approximately 65.6 million. About 99 percent of the population are Muslim, primarily Sunni. The number of persons who actively practice their religion is low in many parts of the country, in part due to a strong adherence to secularism. In addition to the country's Sunni majority, there is a significant Shi'a minority, of which an estimated 12 million are Alevis. Alevis, a heterodox Muslim Shi'a sect, are a distinct persuasion whose rituals include men and women worshipping together through speeches, poetry, and dance. There are several non-Muslim religious minority groups, mostly concentrated in Istanbul and other large cities. While exact membership figures are not available, these include an estimated 50,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians, 25,000 Jews, and from 3,000 to 5,000 Greek Orthodox adherents. There are approximately 3,000 Protestants and 10,000 Baha'is. Additionally, there are an estimated 15,000 Syrian Orthodox (Syriac) Christians and small, undetermined numbers of Bulgarian, Chaldean, Nestorian, Georgian, and Maronite Christians. The number of Christians in the southeast is low, as the younger generation, especially among Syriacs, has migrated to Istanbul, Europe, or North America.

There are no known estimates of the number and religious affiliation of foreign missionaries in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government imposes some restrictions on religious minorities and on Muslim religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities. The Constitution establishes Turkey as a secular state and provides for freedom of belief, freedom of worship, and the private dissemination of religious ideas. However, these rights are restricted by constitutional provisions regarding the integrity and existence of the State.

The Government oversees Muslim religious facilities and education through its Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). The Diyanet, which some groups claim reflects the beliefs of the Sunni Islamist mainstream to the exclusion of other beliefs, regulates the operation of the country's more than 70,000 mosques, and employs imams, who are civil servants. The Government asserts that the Diyanet treats equally all who request services.

A separate government agency, the Office of Foundations (Vakiflar Genel Mudurlugu), regulates some activities of non-Muslim religious minorities and their affiliated churches, monasteries, religious schools, and related property. The Vakiflar also regulates Muslim charitable religious foundations, including schools and hospitals. There are 160 minority foundations, including Greek Orthodox (about 70 sites), Armenian Orthodox (about 50), and Jewish (20), as well as Syrian Christians, Chaldeans, Bulgarian Orthodox, Georgians, and Maronis. Minority foundations, including those of religions recognized under the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish), may not acquire property for any purpose, although they can lose it. If a community does not use its property because of a decline in the size of its congregation over 10 years, the Vakiflar takes over direct administration and ownership. If such minorities can demonstrate a renewed community need, they may apply legally to recover their properties.

During the period covered by this report, the military and judiciary, with support from other members of the country's secular elite, continued to wage a private and public campaign against Islamic fundamentalism, which they view as a political threat to the democratic secular republic. The NSC—a powerful military/civilian body established by the Constitution to advise senior leadership on national security matters—categorizes religious fundamentalism as a threat to public safety and order and introduced an 18-point antifundamentalist program in February 1997. Despite the NSC's activism on this issue, legislative measures have been taken on only 5 of the 18 points. In August 2000, with urging from the NSC, the Prime Minister declared a "decree with force of law" to facilitate dismissal of civil servants suspected of anti-state (including Islamist) activities, one of the remaining February 1997 points. The President refused to sign the decree and returned it to the Prime Minister for parliamentary consideration. Despite urging from the Turkish General Staff to consider this a high priority, Parliament has not taken up the issue.

As a minority within the predominant (Sunni Muslim) faith, Alevis freely practice their religion and build "Cem houses" (Alevi places of gathering). Many Alevis allege discrimination in the State's failure to include any of their doctrines or beliefs in religious instruction classes in public schools, and charge a Sunni bias in the Diyanet, which views the Alevis as a cultural rather than a religious group. No funds are allocated specifically from the Diyanet budget for Alevi activities or religious leadership. However, some Sunni Islamic political activists charge that the secular State favors and is under the influence of the Alevis.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

There is no law that explicitly prohibits proselytizing or religious conversions; however, many prosecutors and police regard proselytizing and religious activism with suspicion, especially when such activities are deemed to have political overtones. Police sometimes arrest proselytizers for disturbing the peace, "insulting Islam," conducting unauthorized educational courses, or distributing literature that has criminal or separatist elements. Courts usually dismiss such charges. If the proselytizers are foreigners, they may be deported, but generally they are able to reenter the country.

Participation in Tarikats (religious orders and communities) and other mystical Sunni Islamic, quasi-religious, and social orders has been banned officially since the 1920's but is largely tolerated. The NSC has called for stricter enforcement of the ban as part of its campaign against the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism. Nevertheless, prominent political and social leaders continue to be associated with Tarikats or other Islamic communities. In August 2000, Islamic leader Fetullah Gulen was indicted for "attempting to change the characteristics of the Republic"

by allegedly trying to establish a theocratic Islamic state. The prosecutor also alleged that Gulen attempted to “infiltrate” the military. The Government is seeking a maximum 10-year sentence based on Turkey’s Anti-Terror Law. At the time of the indictment, the Chief of the Turkish General Staff said publicly that Gulen “plans to undermine the State” and has supporters in the civil service. Gulen, who is in the United States, is still being tried in absentia.

In June 2001, Sufi Muslim preacher Aydogan Fuat was arrested on charges of causing religious enmity, conducting illegal religious activities that threaten the secular State, and wearing banned religious clothing.

The military regularly dismisses from the service individuals whose official files reflect participation in Islamist fundamentalist activities.

The Government continued to enforce a more than 50-year-old ban on the wearing of religious head coverings at universities or by civil servants in public buildings. Dozens of women who wear head coverings, and both men and women who actively show support for those who defy the ban, have lost their jobs in the public sector as nurses and teachers; some others were not allowed to register as university students.

Small, peaceful protests against this policy occurred at various points during the period covered by this report. In July 2000, Deputy Prime Minister Bahceli confirmed a circular issued by the State Planning Organization barring any civil servants or family members wearing a headscarf from entering the organization’s rest and recreation facilities. The courts have ruled that universities are public institutions and, as such, have an obligation to protect the country’s basic principles such as secularism. The Turkish Higher Education Council (YOK) ruled in March 2001 that Fatih University could not register new students for the upcoming academic year, and might be subject to further sanctions, because the university allegedly has close ties to Fetullah Gulen and had violated the dress code by allowing students to wear headscarves. However, a higher administrative court reversed the YOK decision in May 2001.

In May 1999, the State filed a motion to close the Islamist Fazilet (Virtue) Party for promoting antiseccular activity and for representing the ideologies of the former Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party, which was banned in 1998. The indictment also called for banning Fazilet’s leaders from politics for 5 years and stripping its over 100 Members of Parliament of their seats. In February 2001, the Constitutional Court’s chief prosecutor updated the indictment, arguing that videotapes from Fazilet’s May 2000 convention prove that it is a continuation of Refah, but seeking to strip only two parliamentarians of their seats. He noted that pictures of Refah leader and former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan were displayed prominently during the party convention. In June 2001, the Constitutional Court ruled to close Fazilet and expel two party members from Parliament. The Court found Fazilet guilty of being a center of activities “contrary to the principle of the secular Republic.” The European Court of Human Rights continues to consider the appeal of the 1998 closure of Refah.

In December 2000, under a new “suspension of punishment law,” Erbakan’s March 2000 sentence of 1-year’s imprisonment was suspended before he entered prison. Erbakan had been convicted of violating the Penal Code (Article 312) by “promoting enmity” along religious lines, for a speech he had made in 1994, in which (among other things) he referred to parliamentarians as “infidels.”

Government authorities do not interfere on matters of doctrine pertaining to minority religions, nor do they restrict the publication or use of religious literature among members of the religion.

The authorities monitor the activities of Eastern Orthodox churches. While the Government does not recognize the ecumenical nature of the Greek Orthodox patriarch, it acknowledges him as head of the Turkish Greek Orthodox community and does not interfere with his travels or other ecumenical activities. Since 1971 the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul has sought to reopen the seminary on the island of Halki in the Sea of Marmara. The seminary has been closed since 1971, when the State nationalized all private institutions of higher learning. Under current restrictions, including a citizenship requirement, religious communities remain unable to train new clergy for eventual leadership. Coreligionists from outside Turkey have been permitted to assume leadership positions.

After a 1997 law made 8 years of secular education compulsory, the Government stopped new enrollments in Islamic imam-Hatip schools (in existence since 1950), although children already in those classes were allowed to finish their grades. The state-managed imam-Hatip schools were very popular among conservative and Islamist Turks as an alternative to more secular public education. Currently, students may pursue study at Islamic imam-Hatip high schools upon completion of 8 years in the secular public schools. Imam-Hatip schools are classified as vocational,

and therefore the graduates face some barriers to university admission such as an automatic reduction in their entrance exam grades. Only the Diyanet is authorized to provide religious training, usually through the public schools, although some clandestine private religious classes may exist. Students who complete 5 years of primary school may enroll in Diyanet Koran classes on weekends and during summer vacation.

State-sponsored Islamic religious and moral instruction in public 8-year primary schools is compulsory. Upon written verification of their non-Muslim background, minorities "recognized" by the Government under the 1923 Lausanne Treaty (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish) are exempted by law from Muslim religious instruction. These students may attend courses with parental consent. Other non-Muslim minorities, such as Catholics, Protestants, and Syriac Christians, are not exempted. Syriac Christians submitted a report in August 2000 to the President and Prime Minister requesting the right to use their own language for education and broadcasting.

There are legal restrictions against insulting any religion recognized by the State, interfering with that religion's services, or debasing its property.

Under the law, religious services may take place only in designated places of worship. Under municipal codes, only the State can designate a place of worship, and if a religion has no legal standing in the country it may not be eligible for a designated site. Non-Muslim religious services, especially for religions that do not have the status of "official minorities," often take place in diplomatic property or apartments. The Roman Catholic Church in Ankara, for example, is confined to diplomatic property, while Protestants throughout the country operate "storefront" or home churches.

A small Protestant community in Istanbul, which won a legal victory in May 2000 when a court allowed it to establish its own "foundation," is now seeking further legal permission to own property and pay a minister. Normally all "religious" foundations had to have been in existence since the early days of the Republic in order to be deemed as such. Other Turkish Protestant groups have begun the lengthy process of applying for permission to form foundations.

Some religious minority groups have lost property in the past, or continue to fight against expropriations. An Armenian community that had dwindled to only two persons in Kirikhan, Hatay province, may lose its church to the Vakıflar. In February 2001, the community won the first stage of its appeal of the 1999 decision to expropriate the church, but the legal proceedings continue. In addition, bureaucratic procedures and considerations relating to historic preservation at times have impeded repairs to religious facilities, although the Syriac Christians were able to complete needed repairs on some buildings in Mardin. Restoration or construction may be carried out in buildings and monuments considered "ancient" only with authorization of the Regional Board on the Protection of Cultural and National Wealth.

In February 2001, the Baha'i community lost a legal appeal against government expropriation of a sacred site near Edirne, and brought the case to the High Administrative Court. The Ministry of Culture had granted cultural heritage status to the site in 1993, but in January 2000, the Baha'i community was notified by the Ministry of Education that the property had been expropriated for future use by the adjacent primary school. The Ministry has deposited funds in the Baha'i community's bank account for the expropriated property but the Baha'i are continuing to fight the expropriation.

Although religious affiliation is listed on national identity cards, there is no official discrimination based upon religious persuasion.

Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom

In May 2001, an Islamic leader began serving a 2-year sentence for "inciting religious hatred." Mehmet Kutlular, leader of the Nur Cemaati religious community, had published a statement in October 1999 alleging that the August 1999 earthquake (that killed over 17,000 people) was "divine retribution" for laws banning headscarves in state buildings and universities. He exhausted his final appeal in early 2001 and will serve a minimum of 9 months and 23 days.

Police occasionally bar Christians from holding services in private apartments and from proselytizing by handing out literature. These activities also occasionally lead to police detention and trials. The trial of Turkish Christian Kemal Timur opened in January 2001 on charges of insulting Islam. Timur, who was arrested and detained for one day in May 2000, alleges that he was beaten on the soles of his feet while in detention. His trial is continuing. A Christian congregation in Gaziantep has encountered difficulty in obtaining permission to hold services. One member of the group was briefly detained for allegedly bribing people to convert to Christianity. Two Turkish Christians who had been detained near Izmir in March 2000

on a charge of “insulting Islam” by distributing Bibles were acquitted in May 2000. Several Christians in Istanbul continue to stand trial on the charge of “illegal assembly” for holding church and bible study meetings in an apartment. The group of seven (one American, five Turks and one Australian) was detained overnight in May 2000.

The Baha’i community has also faced problems with the police, including the January 2001 arrest of two men (one American) for allegedly proselytizing in Sivas. The men were released immediately, pending an investigation. Also in January, a local imam in Sivas criticized proselytizing by members of the Baha’i faith. In his public rebuke, he read a Koranic verse alluding to those “whose killing is necessary.” Baha’i officials have met with local authorities to inform them of the nature of their activities and to request an end to harassment.

A Syriac priest in Diyarbakir was briefly detained in December 2000, put on trial, but acquitted in April 2001 of charges that he “incited ethnic hatred” by stating in October 2000 that allegations of “Armenian genocide” during World War I were justified.

Except for the above cases, there were no reports of persons who were detained or imprisoned solely for their religious beliefs.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

In December 2000, the President issued a Christmas goodwill message (for the second time in the country’s history) and, for the first time, a Hanukkah message. Also in December 2000, National authorities and the municipality of Istanbul renamed a street in Istanbul (where the former Apostolic Delegation stands) after Pope John XXIII, in honor of his life and work as “a friend of the Turks.”

In June 2001, hundreds of visiting Armenian Americans, led by the Turkish Armenian Patriarch and a visiting American Prelate, celebrated a mass in Kayseri, central Turkey, in honor of 1,700 years of Armenian Christianity. Turkish government officials and representatives of the U.S. Embassy attended the ceremony. The group then traveled extensively throughout the country, visiting sites of personal and religious significance.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Jews and most Christian denominations freely practice their religions and report little discrimination in daily life. However, many Turks who have converted to Christianity experience some form of harassment or pressure from family and neighbors. Some members of religious minorities claim that they have limited career prospects in government or military service. Proselytizing is socially unacceptable.

Extremist groups or individuals target minority communities from time to time. In April 2001, the Jewish community in Istanbul received a phone threat against a 500-year-old synagogue. Police provided additional security upon request. Many religious minority members, along with many in the secular political majority of Muslims, fear the possibility of rising Islamic extremism and the involvement of even moderate Islam in politics. Several Islamist newspapers regularly publish anti-Semitic material.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Mission discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Mission officials, including staff of the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul and the U.S. Consulate in Adana, enjoy close relations with the Diyanet, the Ecumenical Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate, Jewish communities in major cities, and other religious groups. The U.S. Embassy has urged the Government of Turkey to re-open the Halki Seminary. The Ambassador and other embassy officers also remain in close contact with local nongovernmental organizations that monitor freedom of religion and with minority religious group representatives.

Embassy and Consulate staff members are in close contact with representatives of religious minorities in the country and consult frequently on the status of religious freedom. They also monitor and report on incidents of detention of foreigners found proselytizing, and have attended the trials of Americans and others facing charges relating to free expression and the free practice of religion.

TURKMENISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and does not establish a state religion; however, in practice the Government exercises control over all forms of religious expression, including the only two registered religions, Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodox Christianity. The Government requirement that religious groups must have at least 500 members in order to register effectively prevents all other religions from registering. Nonregistered religious congregations are present in the country, but the Government severely restricts their activities. Such groups are prohibited from gathering publicly, proselytizing and disseminating religious materials. The Government's interpretation of the law severely restricts their freedom to meet in private homes.

The Government's respect for freedom of religion deteriorated during the period covered by the report. Harassment of unregistered religious groups intensified and included torture, arrest, and seizure or destruction of property.

There is no notable societal discrimination or violence based on religion in the country. Society historically has been tolerant and inclusive of different religious beliefs. The Government's restrictions on nontraditional religions apparently do not stem from doctrinal differences or societal friction between the majority Muslim population and non-Muslim communities. Rather, some observers have speculated that official restrictions on religious freedom, a holdover from the Soviet era, reflect the Government's concern that liberal religious policies could lead to political dissent, including in particular the introduction of Islamic extremist movements into the country. The Government appears to view participation in nontraditional religions as a threat to the stability and the neutrality of the State.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Representatives of the Embassy met frequently with the Government to appeal for greater support for religious freedom. The Ambassador, along with ambassadors from the European Union, repeatedly urged the Government to release religious prisoner Shageldi Atakov. Embassy officers attended several court hearings on the eviction of a Baptist pastor from the house in which his congregation held services.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 188,407 square miles and its population is approximately 5 million.

Reliable statistics regarding religious affiliation are not available. According to the Government's 1995 census, ethnic Turkmen constituted 77 percent of the population and are predominantly Sunni Muslim. Minority populations include ethnic Uzbeks (9.2 percent), ethnic Russians (6.7 percent) and ethnic Kazakhs (2 percent). The remainder of the population consists of Armenians, Azeris and other ethnic groups. Both the ethnic Uzbeks and Kazakhs are Sunni Muslim. There are small pockets of Shi'a Muslims in the country, many of whom are ethnic Iranians living along the border with Iran. There has been a modest, government-sponsored and tightly controlled revival of Islam since independence. During the Soviet era, there were only 4 mosques operating; now there are an estimated 318. Nevertheless, mosque-based Islam does not play a dominant role in society, in part due to 70 years of Soviet rule and in part because of the country's indigenous religious culture. Traditionally, Turkmen express Islam more through rituals associated with birth, marriage, and death, and through pilgrimage to the tombs of saints, rather than through regular attendance at a mosque.

While the 1995 census showed that Russians comprised almost 7 percent of the population, emigration to Russia and elsewhere probably has reduced this proportion considerably. The remaining 5 percent of the population consists of Armenians, Azeris, and other ethnic groups. Among the Russian population, practicing Christians are most likely to be members of the Russian Orthodox Church, but their level of religious observance is uncertain. There are 11 Russian Orthodox churches in the main cities, 3 of which are in Ashgabat. The Russian Orthodox Church is led by a priest resident in Ashgabat, but is under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Archbishop in Tashkent. There are five Russian Orthodox priests, but no seminaries. There are plans to build a Russian Orthodox cathedral in Ashgabat, but no date has been set to begin construction. There are no Armenian Catholic churches. There are also small communities of Pentecostal Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Baha'is, and Hare Krishna. None of these groups is registered; or maintains churches. (The Seventh-Day Adventist church was demolished by the Government in November 1999.) While most Christians are ethnic Russians, there are groups of ethnic Turkmen Christians as well. There is a Roman

Catholic community in Ashgabat that meets in the chapel of the Vatican Embassy. It includes both citizens and foreigners. A very small community of ethnic Germans, most of whom live in and around the city of Serakhs, reportedly practices the Lutheran faith.

An estimated 1,000 ethnic Jews live in the country. Most of their families came here during World War II from Ukraine, but there are also some Jewish families living in Turkmenabat, on the border with Uzbekistan, who are members of the community known as "Bokharski" Jews, referring to the city of Bokhara, in Uzbekistan. Virtually all Jews in the country are reportedly nonpracticing. There are no synagogues or rabbis in the country. The size of the Jewish community is dwindling as members emigrate to Israel, Germany, and the U.S.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, as does the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which was amended in 1995 and 1996; however, in practice, the law has been interpreted to control religious life tightly and to restrict severely the activities of all religions.

According to the law on religious organizations, all congregations are required to register with the Government. However, in order to register, a congregation must have 500 citizens of at least 18 years of age in each locality in which it wishes to register (i.e., it is not sufficient to have at least 500 members in the country as a whole). These requirements have made it impossible for religious communities other than Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians to register. The situation is exacerbated because ethnic Turkmen members of Christian groups are hesitant to sign their names to a public document that shows that they have converted. Ethnic Turkmen who have converted to Christianity have been subjected to official harassment and mistreatment.

Nonregistered religious groups are officially prohibited from conducting religious activities, including gathering, disseminating religious materials, and proselytizing. This is a consequence of the Government's interpretation of the law rather than because of the law itself, which does not prohibit nonregistered religious groups from gathering. In fact, the Law on Public Associations specifically excludes its application in the case of religious gatherings. Nevertheless, government authorities regularly apply the Law on Public Associations when nonregistered religious groups meet, even if the meetings occur in private homes. Participants are subject to fines and administrative arrest, according to the country's administrative code, and, once administrative measures are exhausted, are subject to criminal prosecution. In such cases, the Soviet-era 1988 regulation on the "procedure for conducting gatherings, meetings, marches, and demonstrations" is applied, although gatherings in private homes are not within the scope of this regulation.

There is no state religion, but the majority of the population is Sunni Muslim. An individual is thought of as being born into an ethnicity and religion at the same time. Departures from the pattern are rare and do not meet with much support in society. The Government has incorporated some aspects of Islamic tradition into its effort to redefine a national identity. At the same time, it is concerned that foreign Islamic movements do not spread into the country. The Government maintains control over the practice of Islam in several ways. It pays the salaries of all Muslim clerics. In 1997 it began prohibiting mosque-based imams from gathering pupils and teaching about Islam. Following President Niyazov's closure of the Zamakhshari Madrasa in Dashoguz in June 2001, the Theological Faculty at Turkmen State University in Ashgabat became the only institution to conduct Islamic education. In addition, the Government continues to control participation in the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj), choosing all participants and limiting the number permitted to participate. In 2001 only 185 Turkmen citizens were given permission by the Government to participate in the Hajj, far fewer pilgrims than the country's quota, which was 4,600. The Government provided free transportation to Mecca and a member of the Council on Religious Affairs accompanied the group.

The Government provides some financial and other support for the construction of new mosques to the Council on Religious Affairs. This body consists of four government officials, one secular official, two Muslim clerics, and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. It acts as an intermediary between the government bureaucracy and registered religious organizations. It has no role in promoting interfaith dialog. Through the Council, the Government also maintains control over the other registered religious institution, the Russian Orthodox Church. Although the Government does not pay the salaries of parish priests, the head of the Church is a member of the Council on Religious Affairs and, as such, is an official of the Government.

Religious holidays that are also national holidays are all Muslim. These include Gurban Bairam (Eid al-Adha), a 3-day holiday that commemorates the end of the Hajj; and Eid al-Fitr, which commemorates the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. These holidays do not have an overt negative impact on any non-Muslim groups.

There is no religious instruction in public schools. However, the Government requires instruction on "Rukhnama," President Niyazov's spiritual guidebook on Turkmen culture and heritage, which was released in February 2001, in all public schools and institutes of higher learning. The Russian Orthodox Church conducts religious instruction classes for children. Home-schooling is allowed only in cases of severe illness or disability, and not for religious reasons.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government's registration requirements for religious groups, which specify that a group must have at least 500 citizens over the age of 18 as members in each locality, effectively prevent all religions but Sunni Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church from practicing openly. However, the only groups specifically banned by the Government are extremist groups that advocate violence.

The Government restricts organized religions in establishing places of worship. The Government does not allow unregistered groups to gather publicly or privately or to establish a church; it punishes individuals or groups who violate these prohibitions.

The Government restricts the number of Muslim places of worship whose construction requires government permission. According to the Council on Religious Affairs, every village should have one mosque. While large, monumental mosques, such as the ones in Ashqatab, and Gok Tepe, and the one planned for Kipchak, are supported by the Government, village mosques are supported by the local population. In theory villagers wishing to build a mosque must first obtain land from the local authorities, then get permission from nearby residents and provide the funding for construction and maintenance.

The Government also controls and restricts access to Islamic education. Beginning in 1997, the Government began to prohibit mosque-based imams from teaching Islam to pupils. In a meeting with media and academic leaders in June 2001, President Niyazov criticized the expansion of a network of Islamic schools and ordered the closure of one of the two theological centers remaining in the country, the Zamakhshari Madrasa in Dashoguz. The only remaining government center for Islamic education is the Theological Faculty at Turkmen State University in Ashgabat. The Government also exercises control over who is allowed to participate in the Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. The Government chooses all participants. In February 2001, only 185 pilgrims were chosen, although the country could have sent many more.

The Government also has attempted to restrict the freedom of parents to raise their children in accordance with their religious beliefs. When an Adventist pastor was detained in Turkmenabat in October 2000, one of the Government's formal charges against him was that he was corrupting minors because children of congregation members were present at the prayer service.

Foreign missionary activity is prohibited, although there is evidence that both Christian and Muslim missionaries have some presence in the country. Ethnic Turkmen members of unregistered religious groups who are accused of disseminating religious material receive harsher treatment than non-ethnic Turkmen, especially if they have received financial support from foreign sources.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In November 1999, the Government razed the Seventh-Day Adventist church in Turkmenbat. In October 2000, the Adventist pastor was detained and questioned for several days in Turkmenabat after police and Internal Security Service (KNB) officials raided a prayer service he was conducting in a private apartment. In March 2001, an unregistered Baptist congregation was evicted from the private house in which it had held religious services for over 20 years. In April 2001, a Jehovah's Witnesses service in a private apartment was disrupted by a group of KNB, police, and city officials. In June 2001, the city of Ashgabat determined that the owner of the apartment, a Jehovah's Witness adherent, should be evicted from the apartment and not provided with another because she had used the apartment for holding unauthorized religious meetings. In April 2001, a Pentecostal pastor lost his long court battle against eviction from the house in which he held religious services; the Ashgabat city government implausibly claimed he had made unauthorized renovations that rendered it unsafe for occupation. Despite the pastor's intention to appeal, the city has allowed 20 workers to live in the house. Also in May 2001, a Baptist

pastor and two fellow church members were detained by Mary KNB officials and questioned for several hours after the KNB broke up an open air religious service conducted by the pastor outside Mary. Local police officials prohibited the Baptists from ever travelling to Mary again.

In March 2000, the Government arrested religious leader Hoja Ahmed Orazgulychev and demolished the unregistered mosque and religious school operated by Orgazgulychev and his followers. Orazgulychev subsequently was released and sentenced to internal exile in Tedjen. Orazgulychev was charged with participating in a kidnaping plot, but his arrest came after he criticized President Niyazov for directing that local children dance around a Christmas tree during New Year's celebrations.

In November 2000, four ethnic Turkmen Baptists were detained, interrogated, and tortured by KNB officials in Anau, outside of Ashgabat, after Christian literature was found in their car by local police. In December the four Baptists again were detained and harassed by the KNB in Ashgabat and Turkmenabat. In December 2000, three of the ethnic Turkmen Baptists were forced to sign documents ceding houses, used for religious purposes, over to the Government, although they were allowed to keep their personal property.

In February 2001, human rights organizations and the international press reported that Baptist prisoner Shalgeldi Atakov had suffered a heart attack in prison and was gravely ill. Atakov has been in prison since 1999 for allegedly making an illegal transfer of automobiles in 1994. His original sentence of 2 years had been extended to 4 years and he was fined \$12,000, an unusually large fine for such an offense. Atakov denied the charges and claimed that he was being imprisoned because of his religious beliefs. Following high-level approaches by foreign governments and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Atakov was transferred to a hospital prison near Mary. After his recovery, he was returned to his original prison and then, according to the authorities, was transferred in April 2001 to the maximum security prison in Turkmenbashi for violating prison rules. Although the religious press contains many statements about the circumstances surrounding his imprisonment, including the allegation that he was tortured in prison, and his subsequent potential release, such statements were impossible to confirm. Also in February 2001, according to the Keston News Service, the local authorities of the Niyazov district of Ashgabat sealed the country's last functioning Baptist church. In March 2001, the authorities reportedly broke the seals and removed all of the church's contents. The church had been in existence for 20 years, and was corporately owned by the congregation, which had been registered under the Soviets and lost registration in 1997 under the new law.

The religious press reported that Dmitri Melnichenko, a member of a Baptist Church in Ashgabat, was arrested and tortured because of his persistent refusal, on religious grounds, to perform military service. These reports have not been independently confirmed.

Several members of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been imprisoned for conscientious objection were not released at the end of their term because they refused to swear an oath of loyalty to the President.

There were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

A group of young Roman Catholics, all Turkmen citizens, traveled to Rome in August, 2000, to meet with the Pope and participate in the World Youth Day conference. This was a departure from the country's severely restrictive policies on travel. The Baha'i community, whose members had been prevented from conducting services since 1997, gathered publicly to celebrate Novruz Bairam in March 2001, and sent a delegation from Turkmenistan to Israel in June 2001 to participate in the opening ceremony of a Baha'i garden in Haifa.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There was neither general, overt societal discrimination nor any violence based on religion during the period covered by this report. Turkmen culture historically is tolerant and inclusive of different religious beliefs. For example, in the early part of the 20th century, Ashgabat was a refuge for members of the Baha'i Faith escaping persecution in Iran, and the first Baha'i temple was built in Ashgabat. Government repression of minority religions does not reflect doctrinal or societal friction

between the majority Muslim population and minority religions. Rather, observers believe that it reflects the Government's concern that the proliferation of nontraditional religions could lead to loss of state control, civil unrest, and the undermining of the Niyazov Government. The societal attitude toward conversion from Islam to any other religion generally is surprise, and often disapproval. Although most citizens do not emphasize mosque attendance or observance of many Islamic customs practiced in other parts of the Muslim world, they view being Muslim as an integral part of the national culture and of Turkmen identity.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy has approached the Government regularly regarding the issue of religious freedom, at every level up to the President. In December 2000, the Charge joined EU ambassadors in protesting the brutal treatment of four ethnic Turkmen Baptists detained by the Government in November 2000, and demanded restitution of their property. In January 2001, an embassy officer, along with embassies from the EU and OSCE representatives, was successful in gaining access to the court hearing over the eviction of a Pentecostal pastor from his house. The embassy officer attended all subsequent hearings in the eviction case. In February 2001, following news that Baptist prisoner Shageldi Atakov was gravely ill, the Ambassador and EU ambassadors urged the Foreign Minister to release religious prisoner Shageldi Atakov, immediately. The Government responded by transferring Atakov to a prison hospital outside of Mary for treatment. In May 2001, embassy officers met with Atakov's family in Kakkha and later with Atakov in Ashgabat.

UKRAINE

The Constitution and 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom improved somewhat; however, religious organizations continued to experience difficulties with registration and bureaucracy at the local level. President Leonid Kuchma continued to meet with leaders from across the country's religious spectrum. The President and members of the cabinet spoke out on numerous occasions in support of religious tolerance and cited the June 2001 visit of Pope John Paul II as evidence of this tolerance. Restitution of religious property seized during Soviet rule continues, although at a slower pace than in previous years.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. According to Jewish leaders, acts of anti-Semitism continued to decline during the period covered by this report. However, inter-Orthodox relations, the erection of crosses at or near Jewish and Moslem burial grounds, and Pope John Paul II's June 2001 to Ukraine were sources of tension between various religious groups.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy maintains a dialog with the State Committee for Religious Affairs, religious leaders, and Ukrainian and Western representatives of faith-based social service organizations active in the country. Representatives of the U.S. Department of State participate in this process as well, meeting with various representatives of the country's religious communities in Washington.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 223,089 square miles and its population is approximately 49.5 million. A June 2001, nationwide survey conducted by the research center Sociological Research (SOCIS) found that over 40 percent of citizens claimed that they were atheists. This statistic highlights the fact that a significant portion of the population who claim a denominational association may be only nominal believers. Religious practice is strongest in the western part of the country. The overwhelming majority (over 90 per cent) of religiously active citizens are Christian, with the majority of these being Orthodox. About 10 per cent of believers are members of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Roman Catholics claim 1 million adherents in the country, or about 2 percent of the total population. The country has

small but significant populations of Jews and Moslems, as well as growing communities of Baptists, Adventists, evangelical Christians, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Most citizens identify themselves as Orthodox Christians of one of three churches. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, is the largest single religious community in the country and is the largest of the country's Orthodox Churches as well. This Church has 9,049 registered communities, most of them located in Central, Southern, and Eastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, is headed by Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan of Kiev. It is part of the Russian Orthodox Church, and it is the only canonically recognized Orthodox Church in the country.

The second largest Orthodox Church is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate. This Church was formed after independence and has been headed since 1995 by Patriarch of Kiev and All Rus'-Ukraine, Filaret Denisenko, once the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan of Kiev. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, has 2,781 registered parishes, approximately 60 per cent of which are in the western part of the country.

The smallest of the three major Orthodox Churches is the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Outlawed by Stalin in 1933, the Church survived mainly in diaspora. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was legalized in 1989 and has 1,015 registered communities, most in the western part of the country. In the interest of the possible future unification of the Orthodox Churches of the country, it did not name a Patriarch to succeed the late Patriarch Dmitriy. Metropolitan Mefodiy of Ternopil and Podil heads the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church; it counts among its spiritual leaders Metropolitan Konstantin, a leader of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the United States.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the second largest faith in the country. This Church celebrates a Byzantine liturgy similar to the Orthodox but is in full communion with the Pope. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was forced to reunite with the Orthodox Church after the Second World War but survived in hiding in the country and in diaspora. Legalized in 1989, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's 3,317 registered communities serve a majority of believers in western Ukraine, about 10 per cent nationwide, or about 4.5 to 5 million persons. The head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is Lyubomyr Cardinal Huzar, Major Archbishop of Lviv.

The Roman Catholic Church traditionally is associated with the country's historical pockets of citizens of Polish ancestry, located predominantly in the center and west of the country. The Roman Catholic Church has 807 registered communities serving roughly 2 percent of the population. Marian Cardinal Jaworski, Archbishop of Lviv, heads the Roman Catholic Church in the country.

The Jewish community has a long history dating back centuries to when much of present-day Ukraine was the Russian Empire's Pale of Settlement. Many of the country's Jews were victims of the Holocaust; still others were victims of Soviet repression. Published reports cite estimates of the country's Jewish population ranging from 250,000 to 325,000 persons. Some Jewish leaders claim a population as high as 500,000 persons. An estimated 35 to 40 percent of the Jewish population are active communally; there are 229 registered Jewish communities in the country.

The Jewish population faces demographic difficulties. Emigration to Israel and the West reduces the country's Jewish population by approximately 30,000 persons annually. In addition, the average age of Jews is 60 years and scholars and local Jewish leaders say that about 12 deaths occur for every birth in the community. In spite of these demographic indicators, Jewish life continues to flourish, with additional communities registered every year. Most active Jews are Orthodox, their leader is Chief Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich. The smaller Progressive (Reform) Jewish movement, although smaller, continues to grow, with 42 communities at the end of the period covered by this report. The Chief Rabbi of the Progressive movement is Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny. During the period covered by this report, Conservative Judaism, called Traditional Judaism in Ukraine, opened its first congregation in Uzhorod.

Islam also has been practiced in the territory that is now Ukraine for centuries. Most of the country's Moslems are Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatars forcibly were deported from Crimea in 1944 but began to return in 1989. Approximately 260,000 persons or 12 per cent of Crimea's population are Crimean Tatar. The leader of the Muslims of Crimea is Mufti Emirali Ablayev.

There has been a growth of Protestant churches since independence. Evangelical Baptists are perhaps the largest group, claiming over 130,000 members in more than 2,100 communities. Other growing communities include Seventh-Day Advent-

ists, Pentecostals, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, and evangelical Christians.

Communities representing nontraditional religious movements continue to grow. Since independence, 42 Krishna Consciousness communities, 36 Buddhist communities, and 12 Baha'i communities have been formed.

Foreign religious workers are active in many faiths, particularly in Protestant and Mormon communities where missionary activity has been central to community growth. The Jewish community also depends on foreign religious workers; only one of the country's rabbis is a citizen.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1996 Constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for separation of church and state and the right to practice the religion of one's choice. The Government generally respects these rights in practice, although some minority and nontraditional religions continued to experience difficulties in registration and purchasing or leasing property at the local level.

The law requires virtually all religious organizations to register with the State. The State Committee for Religious Affairs is responsible for liaison with religious organizations and for execution of state policy on religion. The Committee's headquarters is in Kiev and it maintains representations in all regional capitals as well as in Sevastopol. Every religious organization with more than 10 adult members must register its articles and statutes either as a local or a national organization in order to obtain the status of a "juridical entity," a status necessary to conduct many economic activities including publishing, banking, and property transactions. Registration is also necessary for an organization to be considered for restitution of religious property. National organizations must register with the Committee for Religious Affairs, and then each local affiliate must register with the local office of the State Committee in the region in which they are located. By law the registration process should take 1 month, or 3 months if the State Committee requests an expert opinion on the legitimacy of a group applying for registration. Denial of registration can be appealed in court. In addition to registration, local offices of the State Committee supervise compliance of religious organizations with the provisions of the law.

In the first half of 2001, the country's parliament, the "Verkhovna Rada" (Supreme Council), considered three proposals for changes to the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion. According to the State Committee, as well as representatives of religious communities, changes put forward in the various proposals included changes to registration procedures, strengthening (or weakening) the State Committee on Religious Affairs, codifying presidential decrees on restitution of religious property, and expanding the types of religious property eligible for restitution. All three drafts failed, with none garnering half the votes needed for passage.

There is no state religion, although the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, tends to predominate in the eastern part of the country and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church tends to predominate in the west. Some religious leaders allege that local government officials in the east and west favor the predominant confessions in those regions, although each of the country's major religions and many of its smaller ones maintain a presence in all parts of the country. While the Government has spoken out in favor of unity of the Orthodox Churches in the country, it has tried to deal evenhandedly with all of the Orthodox Churches.

The Government generally permits religious organizations to establish places of worship and to train clergy. It continued to facilitate the building of houses of worship by allocation of land plots for new construction and through restitution of religious buildings to previous owners. However, there were bureaucratic obstacles and the overall pace of restitution slowed in comparison with previous reporting periods.

Officially, religious instruction is prohibited in the public school curriculum. Schools run by religious communities can and do include religious education as an extracurricular activity. During the period covered by this report, the Government began attempts to introduce training in "Basic Christian Ethics" into the schools. While the country's Jewish leaders support the teaching of ethics and civics in school, they insist on a nonsectarian approach to this training. A working group of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches has been formed to discuss the content of such a program. The Council meets under the auspices of the State Committee of Religious Affairs and is composed of the leaders of 18 of the country's largest Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities, representing over 90 per cent of the country's religious adherents. Religious leaders describe the Council as collegial, encouraging interfaith dialogue and dispute resolution.

There are numerous religious holidays, including Christmas Day, Easter Monday, and Holy Trinity Day, all are celebrated according to the Julian Calendar shared by Orthodox and Greek Catholics. These holidays do not negatively impact any religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Members of numerous communities described difficulties in dealing with the Kiev's municipal administration in obtaining land permits and building permits, problems not limited to religious groups. Restitution continued at a slower pace than in previous years. Some religious leaders were pleased with this pace, while others felt that it was too slow.

A 1993 amendment to the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion limits the activities of foreign religious workers in the country. In order to obtain religious worker visas invitations must be obtained from registered religious organizations and the approval of the State Committee on Religious Affairs is required. During the year 2000, 14,797 foreign religious workers were admitted. In the first 5 months of 2001, 5,520 foreign religious workers were admitted. The majority of foreign religious workers were from the United States and most worked in Protestant communities. In previous years, fewer than half of 1 per cent of applications for religious visas were refused, according to the State Committee, usually because forms were completed improperly. While no refusal data was available for the period covered by this report, no religious communities claimed to have experienced problems obtaining religious worker visas during this period.

Under existing law, religious organizations maintain a privileged status as the only organizations permitted to seek restitution of property confiscated by the Soviet regime. Currently, only buildings and objects immediately necessary for religious worship are subject to restitution. Communities must apply to regional authorities for restitution. While the consideration of a claim should take a month, it frequently takes much longer. Draft laws considered by the Parliament in 2001 would have expanded the types of property eligible for restitution to include religious schools and administrative buildings; all such proposed drafts were defeated. According to the State Committee for Religious Affairs, over 3,600 buildings and 10,000 religious objects have been returned to religious communities since the country's Independence in 1991. A total of 47 of these buildings were returned in the period covered by this report, to all three Orthodox churches, Jewish, Moslem, Ukrainian Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic communities.

Outstanding claims for restitution remain among all the major religious communities. Many properties that remain subject to restitution are occupied, often by state institutions, or are historical landmarks. The slowing pace of restitution is, among other things, a reflection of the country's difficult economic condition, which severely limits funds available for the relocation of the current occupants of seized religious property. Competition among Orthodox churches for particular properties also complicates the restitution issue. In conjunction with a January 15, 2001, Cabinet of Ministers Decree, the State Committee on Religious Affairs began a project to facilitate the periodic usage by religious groups of religious buildings that are state architectural landmarks whose return is not planned.

Representatives of the both the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church alleged government preference for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate in eastern regions of the country. The Kiev Patriarchate cited local authorities' failure to return cathedrals in Kharkiv or Zhytomyr.

On Independence Day, August 24, 2000, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, celebrated the restitution of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves' Assumption Cathedral and its solemn rededication. This led to a peaceful demonstration by supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate. This Cathedral is of great historical significance for the country's Orthodox Christians and it was restored at government expense, which caused some to claim that this act showed the Government's preference for the Moscow Patriarchate. However, in May 2000, the Government returned St. Michael's Monastery, also of historical significance and rebuilt with government funds, to the Kiev Patriarchate. The State Committee on Religious Affairs, although supportive of a unified, independent Orthodox Church for the country, has maintained neutrality in its relations with the various Orthodox churches.

Autocephalous Church representatives cited instances of difficulties in providing religious services to soldiers and of the need to clear prison ministry activities with prison chaplains of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Representatives of evangelical Christian communities expressed concern over instances of discrimination against their adherents. In two cases, they assert that believers were forced to leave jobs in the military or in military production because

their evangelical churches had contact with missionaries from the United States. Such incidents appear to be isolated. An evangelical pastor also noted that local authorities in some cities had denied permits for religious processions and that in a village in the Odessa region an evangelical church opposed by a local Orthodox community had been refused permission to hold regular Church services. Evangelical Churches, like many other religious communities, experienced difficulties in procuring land plots. Representatives of the Progressive Jewish Communities of Ukraine claimed that pressure from Chabad Lubavitch officials on local Dnipropetrovsk authorities has led to a 5-year delay in the granting of registration to a Progressive Jewish community in the city. According to press reports and representatives of Jewish communities, the Dnipropetrovsk Chabad Community opposes the registration of any Jewish community but Chabad in the city, which was home to the father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

There were a number of improvements in the Government's respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, including court action against anti-Semitic publications, the resolution of a longstanding registration case, and liberalization in the by-laws of the State Committee of Religious Affairs. In addition, several religious institutions previously restituted were rededicated ceremonially and numerous other new religious buildings were opened. Some in the religious community attribute the generally good relations to the work of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches, whose membership represents the faiths of over 90 per cent of the country's religiously active population.

According to a report on anti-Semitism prepared by the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, in December 2000, a Kharkov local court ordered the suspension of publication of the "Dzhereltse" newspaper and the payment of a fine in the amount of approximately \$4,000. The paper had been found liable for "kindling ethnic hatred, violating human and civil rights, and offending the national dignity of the Jews." According to the report, this is the first case in the country's history in which anti-Semitism has been punished by law.

In 1999 the Shimon Dubnov Ukrainian Academy of Jewish History and Culture filed suit against "Vechirniy Kiev," a Kiev daily newspaper, for an anti-Semitic article "Judeophobia Against Ukraine," published in 1998. The newspaper countersued members of the Academy, claiming that it had been charged falsely of being chauvinistic. On March 15, 2001, a Kiev court ordered both the newspaper and the Academy to pay damages of approximately \$550 and \$1,100 respectively. While less than pleased with the verdict, Jewish leaders welcomed the willingness of the Ukrainian Government to provide legal assistance.

A longstanding registration case was resolved in April 2001 in Sevastopol, when an 18 month-old registration application from a Progressive Jewish Community finally was approved by the local Committee for Religious Affairs. In a move intended to improve interfaith dialog, the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches adopted in the spring of 2001 a change to its bylaws permitting religious leaders who are not permanent members of the Council to apply to attend its meetings as observers.

During the period covered by this report, several religious institutions were opened or rededicated. The Chabad community of Dnipropetrovsk rededicated the Golden Rose Choral Synagogue. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, ceremonially rededicated the Assumption Cathedral on the grounds of Kiev's Monastery of the Caves. Ukrainian Greek Catholics of the Eparchate of Kiev dedicated a land plot for their future cathedral on Kiev's left bank. Kiev's Chabad Community celebrated its 10-year anniversary and the opening of a mikvah or ritual bath. In May 2001, the Union of Evangelical Baptist Christians dedicated a House of Prayer in Kharkiv and Jehovah's Witnesses opened an Administrative Center in Briukovychi, Lviv Oblast. Finally, in March 2001, Kiev municipal authorities agreed to offer a plot of land near the site of the Nazi massacre at Babi Yar for a Holocaust museum and community center. This museum and center is expected to be built in the coming years under the auspices of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. According to Jewish leaders, acts of anti-Semitism continued to de-

cline during the period covered by this report. However, inter-Orthodox rivalry, the erection of crosses at or near Jewish and Moslem burial grounds, and the visit of Pope John Paul II caused tension among some religious groups.

Orthodoxy in the country is divided into three major Churches, only one of which (the Moscow Patriarchate) is currently recognized as canonical by world Orthodoxy. The possibility of unification of some or all of these Orthodox Churches and granting them canonical status as an autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been debated during the period covered by this report. Leaders of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church began negotiations on unification. They hoped that as one unit, they would be recognized as the country's Orthodox Church by Orthodoxy's "First Among Equals," Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. By the end of the period covered by this report, an agreement had been reached to allow priests of these two churches to concelebrate liturgies, but the unification of church structures had not been accomplished. Patriarch Bartholomew has supported efforts aimed at Orthodox unity, meeting with or sending delegations to each of the country's three main Orthodox Churches to discuss the issue. Patriarch Bartholomew has not expressed an opinion as to who should lead a united Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In general, support for an independent Orthodox Church (based on the Kiev Patriarchate and Autocephalous Churches) is strongest among western Ukrainians and center-right political parties; Eastern Ukrainians and leftist parties tend to support continued union with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Twice during the period covered by this report the erection of crosses at or near Muslim and Jewish burial sites challenged religious accord. In Crimea, Bishop Lazarus of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, Bishop Lazarus announced an initiative to place 1,000 crosses around Crimea to celebrate the second millennium of the birth of Jesus and a millennium of the Christianization of Rus. One of the crosses, in the village of Morskoye, was placed on a hilltop overlooking a Crimean Tatar Muslim village and cemetery. Local Tatars, who were not consulted about the placement of the cross, removed it. Through dialog, Bishop Lazarus, Crimean Mufti Ablayev, Orthodox residents, and the local Crimean Tatar Mejlis (Council) were able to come to a peaceful settlement of the conflict over this cross by relocating it to a nearby hill overlooking a predominantly Orthodox community.

However, disputes over the erection of crosses in Jewish cemeteries remain unresolved. In Sambor, Lviv Oblast, Jews, with the assistance of a foreign benefactor, began construction of a memorial park at the site of an old Jewish cemetery, which was the scene of Nazi atrocities. Nationalists, with the apparent assistance of local officials, erected crosses on the site to mark the Christian victims of Nazi terror there. While memorial organizers supported the recognition of all groups who suffered on the Sambor site, they opposed the use of Christian religious symbols on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery. At the same time, local nationalists remain opposed to the use of Jewish symbols or Hebrew in the memorial. Jewish and Greek Catholic leaders intervened in an attempt to find a just and peaceful solution to the dispute. In spite of a proposal by the memorial's foreign sponsor to relocate the crosses to another site at his expense, local government leaders had not resolved this conflict by mid-2000.

In Kiev crosses remain on the territory of an old Jewish cemetery near the site of a Nazi massacre at Babi Yar. Jewish leaders assert that the crosses were erected without a building permit and have asked that the crosses be removed.

Pope John Paul II's June 2001 visit was the source of discussion and debate in religious and government circles. The Government actively promoted the Pope's visit as a sign of tolerance. The Pope echoed this theme, as well as asking for forgiveness for sins committed by Catholics. His 5-day visit included masses, a meeting with the all-Ukrainian Council of Churches, and visits to the Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial and a memorial to victims of Stalinism at Bykivnia. The public events were attended by tens of thousands in Kiev and by hundreds of thousands in Lviv. Most religious and political leaders and public opinion supported the Pope's visit. However, the visit was criticized by the Russian Orthodox Church and its affiliate in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate. The Moscow Patriarchate organized small peaceful protests prior to the visit but held no demonstrations during the visit itself. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, used the occasion of the visit to emphasize disputes with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church over church property in the western part of the country. These disputes, in part a legacy of the Soviet Union's forcible reunification of the Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches after World War II, remain a source of tension in interfaith relations in Ukraine.

The country has a long history of problems with anti-Semitism; however, the period covered by this report saw a continued decrease in anti-Semitic acts and anti-

Semitic publications in local newspapers and an increase in government action against anti-Semitism (see Section II). Leaders of the Jewish community welcomed the changes in the editorial staffs of the newspapers, "Vechirniy Kiev" and "Za Vilnu Ukrainu." Under new editors, these newspapers, which had been among the chief offenders in publishing anti-Semitic articles, ceased such activity. During the period covered by this report, a synagogue in Kherson was the target of gunfire. No injuries were reported. Jewish community representatives were disturbed by the presence of anti-Semitic slogans in anti-Kuchma demonstrations, which took place in the spring of 2001.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

The U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, as well as other Embassy officers, demonstrated U.S. Government concern for religious freedom by maintaining an ongoing dialog with government and religious leaders on this topic. Embassy officers also attend significant events in the religious life of the country.

Embassy officers maintained close contact with lay leaders as well as clerics in religious communities and with representatives of faith-based social service organizations such as Caritas and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, both of which are active in the country. In addition, the U.S. Embassy facilitated similar meetings with such groups for U.S. Members of Congress and other U.S. officials visiting Ukraine.

The Embassy closely monitored the cases of erection of crosses in Moslem and Jewish cemeteries. The U.S. Embassy raised the Sambor case with the State Committee on Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture as well as with Ukrainian religious leaders of different faiths. In addition, the U.S. Government raised this case in the context of the U.S./Ukraine Cultural Heritage Commission. U.S. Embassy officers followed the Morskoye/Crimea case through contacts with the Crimean Tatar Mejlis.

U.S. Embassy officers attended the dedication of the Golden Rose Choral Synagogue in Dnipropetrovsk, the mikvah or ritual bath at the Brodsky Synagogue in Kiev, a plot of land for Kiev's Ukrainian Greek Catholic Cathedral, and the dedication of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves' Assumption Cathedral by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate.

Representatives of the U.S. Department of State met during the period covered by this report with various Jewish and Christian leaders from the country.

UNITED KINGDOM

Government policy provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The 1998 Human Rights Act incorporates the principle of religious freedom into law. The Church of England and the Church of Scotland are established churches.

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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom. However, centuries-old sectarian divisions—and instances of violence—are part of the troubles in Northern Ireland.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 94,525 square miles and its population is approximately 59.5 million. There are no official statistics collected on religious beliefs or church membership, except in Northern Ireland. The census conducted in April 2001 contains a voluntary question on religion; the results are expected to be available in the spring of 2003. Although their methodologies differ greatly, the numbers collected by individual religious communities highlight patterns of adherence and belief.

About 65 percent of the population are estimated to identify with some form of Christianity. About 45 percent of the population identify with Anglican churches, 10 percent with the Roman Catholic Church, 4 percent with Presbyterian churches, 2

percent with Methodist churches, and 4 percent with other Christian churches. Only about 8.7 percent of the population attend a Christian church on a regular basis. Church attendance in Northern Ireland is estimated at 30 to 35 percent. An additional 2 percent of the population are affiliated with non-Trinitarian churches, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ, Christian Scientists, and Unitarians. A further 5 percent are adherents to other faiths, including Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism.

About 28 percent of the population are nonreligious. About half of all parents choose to have their children baptized. A similar proportion of all weddings (41.3 percent) is conducted as religious ceremonies, but the number has decreased in recent years. The vast majority of funerals are religious, and surveys suggest that 63 to 70 percent of the population believe in God.

Between the Reformation and the mid-19th century, the country predominantly was Protestant. The Jewish community dates from 1656, with the arrival of Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal, but it experienced much of its growth during the 1800's and 1900's, when Ashkenazic Jews arrived from Eastern Europe. Irish immigration during the 1800's fostered the resurgence of Roman Catholicism, and later immigration from British colonies (and now the Commonwealth) led to the establishment of thriving Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu communities. These latter communities tend to be concentrated around larger cities.

The conflict between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland has been drawn along religious lines, but the avowed policy of the Government remains one of religious neutrality and tolerance (See Section III).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Government policy provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The 1998 Human Rights Act, which entered into force in October 2000, provides for freedom of religion, including the freedom to change one's religion or belief.

There are two established (or state) churches, the Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). The Queen is the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England and must always be a member of the Church and promise to uphold it. The Queen appoints Church of England officials on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Crown Appointments Commission, which includes lay and clergy representatives. The Church of Scotland appoints its own office bearers, and its affairs are not subject to any civil authority. There are no established churches in Wales or Northern Ireland, but the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church of Ireland are members of the Anglican Communion.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government. No church or religious organization—established or otherwise—receives direct funding from the State. Religious bodies are expected to finance their own activities through endowment, investments, and fund-raising. Since 1977 the Government has appropriated funds for the repair of historic church buildings, such as cathedrals, but such funding is not restricted to Church of England buildings. The Government also contributes 70 percent to the budget of the Church Conservation Trust, established by the Church of England in 1969 to preserve "redundant" Church of England buildings of architectural or historic significance. A similar body, the Historic Chapels Trust, founded with the aid of a Government grant, works to preserve, repair, and maintain non-Anglican houses of worship, such as mosques, temples, or synagogues. No such bodies exist in Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland. In March 2001, the Government announced a countrywide grant scheme to help fund the costs for the repair and maintenance of listed buildings used as places of worship.

Most religious institutions are classified as charities and, as such, enjoy a wide range of tax benefits. (The advancement of religion is considered to be a charitable purpose.) In England and Wales, the Charity Commission reviews the application of each body applying for registration as a charity. Commissioners base their decisions on a substantial body of case law. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Inland Revenue performs this task. Charities are exempt from taxes on most types of income and capital gains, provided that the charity uses the income or gains for charitable purposes. They also are exempt from the value-added tax. Donors to charities also enjoy tax relief for their donations. Transfers to charities are exempt from the inheritance tax, capital gains tax, and stamp duty.

Some "voluntary schools" provided by religious groups enjoy state support. While the majority of these schools are Anglican or Catholic, there are a small number

of Methodist, Muslim, and Jewish schools. There also are privately funded schools with religious foundations, including a growing number of Muslim schools.

Religious education in publicly maintained schools is required by law throughout the country. According to the Education Reform Act of 1988, it forms part of the core curriculum for students in England and Wales (the requirements for Scotland were outlined in the Education Act of 1980.) The shape and content of religious instruction is decided on a local basis. Locally agreed syllabi are required to reflect the predominant place of Christianity in religious life, but they must be non-denominational and refrain from attempting to convert pupils. All parents have the right to withdraw a child from religious education, but the schools must approve this request.

In addition schools have to provide a daily act of collective worship. In practice this action mainly is Christian in character, reflecting Christianity's importance in the religious life of the nation. This requirement may be waived if a school's administration deems it inappropriate for some or all of the students. Under some circumstances, non-Christian worship may instead be allowed. Teachers' organizations have criticized school prayer and called for a government review of the practice.

Where a substantial population of religious minorities characterizes a student body, schools may observe the religious festivals of other faiths. Schools also endeavor to accommodate religious requirements, such as providing halal meat for Muslim children.

The Government makes an active effort to ensure that public servants are not discriminated against on the basis of religion and strives to accommodate religious practices by government employees whenever possible. For example, the Prison Service permits Muslim employees to take time off during their shifts to pray. It also provides prisoners with Jewish and Muslim chaplains. The military generally provides soldiers who are adherents of minority religions with chaplains of their faith.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In November 2000, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled inadmissible a challenge by the United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) to the existing ban on nationwide broadcast licenses for religious broadcasters. Due to the limited broadcast spectrum, the 1990 Broadcasting Act precludes certain groups, including those "wholly or mainly of a religious nature," from obtaining the few available national licenses. Due to their limited number, digital radio multiplex licenses, provided for in the 1996 Broadcasting Act, also are unavailable to religious groups. In December 2000, the Government published a White Paper recommending legislation to allow religious groups to own local digital radio licenses. Religious groups can and do compete successfully for the more numerous local and regional stations, and cable and satellite channels; they can advertise. The UCB now broadcasts by satellite without restriction.

The Church of Scientology asserts that it faces discrimination due to the failure of the Government to treat Scientology as a religion. Scientology ministers are not regarded as ministers of religion under prison regulations, thus are not permitted to provide official pastoral care to prisoners; nor are they considered ministers of religion for the purpose of immigration relations. The Government bases its treatment of Scientology on a 1970 judgment by the Court of Appeal, which held that Scientology chapels did not qualify as places of worship under the Places of Worship Registration Act of 1855. In 1999 the Charity Commission rejected a Church of Scientology application for charitable status, concluding that Scientology is not a religion for the purposes of charity law. The Church has not appealed the decision.

In general membership in a given religious group does not confer a political or economic advantage on individual adherents. However, on the national level, the House of Lords provides an exception to this rule. The Anglican Archbishops of York and Canterbury; the Bishops of Durham, London, and Winchester; and 21 other bishops, in order of seniority, receive automatic membership in the House of Lords, whereas prominent clergy from other denominations or religions are not afforded this privilege. Reform of the House of Lords, including the representation of other Christian denominations and other faiths, is being debated.

While it is not enforced and is essentially a legal anachronism, blasphemy against Anglican doctrine remains technically illegal. Several religious organizations, in association with the Commission for Racial Equality, are attempting to abolish the law or broaden its protection to include all faiths.

A February 2001 report commissioned by the Home Office found that some religious groups, particularly those identified with ethnic minorities, reported unfair treatment on the basis of their religious belief. Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and blacked Christian churches were more likely to report problems ranging from lack of rec-

ognition or inclusion of religious beliefs in education to discrimination and/or lack of accommodation of religious beliefs by employers.

In Northern Ireland, government programs and continued economic growth have reduced the overall unemployment rate (6.3 percent as of March 2000). Although there is some evidence that unemployment rates among Catholics remain higher than among Protestants, the often-quoted figure, based on 1991 data, that Catholic male unemployment is twice the rate of Protestant male unemployment, has not been updated reliably.

In accordance with the Good Friday Agreement, the Government established a 20-member Equality Commission. One of the Commission's mandates is to help enforce the Fair Employment and Treatment Order of 1998, which incorporates previous equality legislation and outlaws discrimination based on religion or political opinion in the workplace, and aids in access to goods, facilities, services, and premises. Under the order, all public sector employers and all private firms with more than 10 employees must report annually to the Equality Commission on the religious composition of their workforces and must review their employment practices every 3 years.

In addition Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act stipulates that all public authorities must show due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, including on the basis of religious belief. Each public authority must report its plans to promote equality to the Equality Commission, which is to review such plans every 5 years.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), Northern Ireland's police force, currently is not required to conform to Section 75, and Catholics now comprise less than 8 percent of the police force. However, the Police (Northern Ireland) Act of 2000, which incorporates many of the recommendations of the 1999 Patten Commission report, mandates measures designed to expand Catholic representation in the new Police Service of Northern Ireland. These include the establishment of an independent recruitment agency and a recruitment policy mandating equal intake of qualified Catholics and non-Catholics. The Patten Commission projected that, following implementation of these reforms, Catholics, who comprise approximately 40 percent of the population, would make up 30 percent of the police force within 10 years.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. While the troubles in Northern Ireland are the product of political, economic, and social factors, conflict between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland is rooted in centuries-old sectarian divisions between the Protestant and Catholic communities.

The majority of citizens in Northern Ireland support the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which aims to create a lasting settlement to the conflict in Northern Ireland and a society based on equality of opportunity and human rights.

Employment discrimination on religious grounds is prohibited by law in Northern Ireland, although not in the rest of the country. Those who believe that their freedom of religion has been infringed have the right to appeal to the courts for relief. The 1998 Human Rights Act prohibits public authorities from discriminating on the basis of religion.

The police in Northern Ireland reported 31 attacks against both Catholic and Protestant churches, schools, and meeting halls in 2000. Such sectarian violence often coincides with heightened tensions during the spring and summer marching season. Some parades by the "Loyal Institutions" (the Royal Black Preceptory, Orange Order, and Apprentice Boys), whose membership is almost exclusively Protestant, have been prevented from passing through nationalist areas because of public-order concerns.

During the period covered by this report, there were no reports that the public had raised concerns with the Home Office regarding the Church of Scientology.

According to the Board of Directors of British Jews, the number of anti-Semitic incidents during 2000 was 398, compared with 270 in 1999 (adjusted figure). Public manifestations of anti-Semitism are confined largely to the political fringe, either far right or Islamist. In reaction to the October 2000 violence in the West Bank and

Gaza, a number of synagogues were attacked by persons throwing bricks or other objects through windows, and anti-Semitic leaflets were posted in Manchester, Birmingham, and London. In October 2000, a Jewish man was stabbed in London in an apparent racist attack.

The country has both active interfaith and ecumenical movements. The Council of Christians and Jews, founded in 1942 to promote Christian-Jewish understanding, works to advance better relations between the two religions and to combat anti-Semitism. The Interfaith Network links a wide range of religious and educational organizations with an interest in interfaith relations, including the national representative bodies of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities. The Inner Cities Religious Council encourages interfaith activity through regional conferences and support for local initiatives.

The main ecumenical body is the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, which serves as the main forum for interchurch cooperation and collaboration. Interchurch cooperation is not limited to dealings among denominations at the national level. For example, at the local level Anglican parishes may share their church with Roman Catholic congregations.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

In Northern Ireland, longstanding issues related to religion have been part of the political and economic struggle largely between Protestant and Catholic communities. As an active participant in the peace process, the U.S. Government has supported efforts to diminish sectarian tension and promote dialog between the two largest religious communities.

UZBEKISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and for the principle of separation of church and state; however, in practice the Government only partially respects these rights. The Government perceives unauthorized Islamic groups or mosques as extremist security threats and outlaws them. The Government permits the existence of mainstream religions, including approved Muslim groups, Jewish groups, the Russian Orthodox Church, and various other denominations, such as Catholics, Lutherans, and Baptists and generally registers more recently arrived religions. However, the law prohibits or severely restricts activities such as proselytizing, importing and disseminating religious literature, and offering religious instruction.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government continued its harsh campaign against unauthorized Islamic groups it suspected of anti-State sentiments or activities. The Government arrested hundreds of alleged members of these groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, and sentenced them to lengthy jail terms. The Government also imprisoned dozens of Muslims suspected of being "Wahabbist," a term used loosely to encompass both suspected terrorists and any former students of certain independent imams or foreign madrassas (Islamic schools). The number of Muslim women prosecuted for their alleged involvement in religious groups increased during this reporting period. A number of minority religious groups, including a variety of Christian confessions, Baha'i, and Hare Krishna, had difficulty satisfying the strict registration requirements set out by the law.

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy is engaged actively in monitoring religious freedom and maintains contact with both government and religious leaders.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 117,868 square miles and its population is approximately 24,756,000. There are no official statistics on membership in various faiths, but 80 to 85 percent of the population are nominally Muslim. Since 1991 when the country gained independence from the Soviet Union, there has been a resurgence, particularly in the Fergana valley, of the Sunni variety of Islam tradi-

tional in the region. Another 10 to 15 percent of the population are nominally Russian Orthodox. Only a small portion of members of these two leading faiths actually practices, although the numbers who do so are growing. Because of the decades of Soviet rule, Islam was not previously an important factor in the lives of most citizens.

There are roughly 30,000 Ashkenazy and Bukharan Jews remaining in the country, concentrated in the main cities of Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand. Almost 70,000 have emigrated to Israel or the United States since independence. The remaining 5 to 10 percent of the population include small communities of Korean Christians, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Seventh-Day Adventists, evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, Buddhists, Baha'is, and Hare Krishnas.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and for the principle of separation of church and state; however, in practice the Government only partially respects these rights. The Government is secular and there is no official state religion.

Although the laws treat all religious confessions equally, the Government shows its support for the country's Muslim heritage by funding an Islamic university and subsidizing citizens' participation in the Hajj. The Government promotes a moderate version of Islam through the control and financing of the Spiritual Directorate for Muslims (the Muftiate), which in turn controls the Islamic hierarchy, the content of imams' sermons, and the volume and substance of published Islamic materials.

The Religion Law requires all religious groups and congregations to register and provides strict and burdensome criteria for their registration. Among its requirements, the law stipulates that each group must present a list of at least 100 Uzbek citizen members (compared with the previous minimum of 10) to the local branches of the Ministry of Justice. This provision enables the Government to ban any group simply by denying its registration petition. Government officials designed the law to target Muslims who worship outside the system of state-organized mosques. A special commission created in 1998 may grant exemptions to the religious law's strict requirements and register groups that have not been registered by local officials. The commission has granted exemptions to 51 such groups, including congregations with fewer than 100 Uzbek members. However, no formal procedures or criteria have been established to bring a case before this commission, which did not meet during the period covered by this report.

To register, groups also must report in their charter a valid legal address. Local officials on occasion have denied approval of a legal address in order to prevent churches from registering. Some churches, particularly those with ethnic Uzbek members, have not submitted registration applications because they know they are unable to comply with the law's requirements. For example, although church leaders cite high registration fees and the 100-member rule as obstacles, the most frequent problem is the lack of an approved legal address. Some groups have been reluctant to invest in the purchase of a property without assurance that the registration would be approved. Others claim that local officials arbitrarily withhold approval of the addresses because they oppose the existence of Christian churches with ethnic Uzbek members.

As of May 24, 2001, the Government had registered 2,008 religious congregations and organizations, 1,830 of which were Muslim. The 178 registered minority religious groups include 59 Korean Christian, 32 Russian Orthodox, 22 Pentecostal ("full gospel"), 23 Baptist, 10 Seventh-Day Adventist, 8 Jewish (1 Ashkenazy, 6 Bukharan, 1 mixed), 7 Baha'i, 4 Lutheran, 4 "New Apostolic," 3 Roman Catholic, 2 Jehovah's Witnesses, 2 Krishna Consciousness groups, 1 Bible Society, and 1 Armenian Apostolic. Several of these congregations had fewer than the required 100 members but received exemptions from the requirement. During the previous reporting period, the last one for which statistics are available, 335 applications were denied, 323 of which were from Muslim groups. The number of mosques has increased significantly from the 80 or so permitted during the Soviet era, but has decreased from the 4,000 or more that opened after the country gained independence and before registration procedures were in place. Some groups with too few members have reported that they prefer not to bring themselves to the attention of the authorities by submitting a registration application that does not, on its face, meet legal requirements.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

There were significant governmental restrictions on religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government deprived some politically oriented re-

ligious groups of their right to worship by denying them registration. It also restricted many religious practices and activities, and punished citizens for their religious beliefs. Russians, Jews, and foreigners generally enjoy greater religious freedom than traditionally Muslim ethnic groups, especially ethnic Uzbeks. Christian churches generally are tolerated as long as they do not attempt to win converts among ethnic Uzbeks. Christians who are ethnic Uzbeks are secretive about their faith and rarely attempt to register their organizations. Christian congregations that are of mixed ethnic background are reluctant to list their Uzbek members on registration lists for fear of incurring official displeasure.

In May 1998, the Parliament passed two laws that restrict religious activity. The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations provides for freedom of worship, freedom from religious persecution, separation of church and state, and the right to establish schools and train clergy. However, the law also severely limits religious activity. It restricts religious rights that are judged to be in conflict with national security, prohibits proselytizing, bans religious subjects in schools, prohibits private teaching of religious principles, forbids the wearing of religious clothing in public by anyone other than clerics, and requires religious groups to obtain a license to publish or distribute materials.

The second legislative change enacted in May 1998 consisted of a series of revisions to the Criminal and Civil codes that stiffened the penalties for violating the religion law and other statutes on religious activities. It provided for punishments for activities such as organizing a banned religious group, persuading others to join such a group, and drawing minors into a religious organization without the permission of their parents.

The Criminal Code was amended again in May 1999 with two changes that affected religious freedom. The changes draw a distinction between "illegal" groups, which are those that are not registered properly, and "prohibited" groups, which are banned altogether. The first measure makes it a criminal offense punishable by up to 5 years in prison to organize an illegal religious group or to resume the activities of such a group (presumably after being denied registration or ordered to disband). Furthermore, the measure punishes any participation in such a group by up to 3 years in prison. The second measure sets out penalties of up to 20 years in prison and confiscation of property for "organizing or participating" in the activities of religious extremist, fundamentalist, separatist, or other prohibited groups. In practice, the courts ignore the theoretical distinction between illegal and prohibited groups and frequently convict members of disapproved Muslim groups under both statutes.

Some churches continue to face obstacles in obtaining registration from the Government. Local authorities have blocked registration of Baptist congregations in Gazalkent, Guliston, Andijon, and Novy Zhizn. The Deputy Mayor of Gazalkent allegedly told church leaders that their application might be approved if they removed from the Church's membership list all names of ethnic Uzbek origin. In December 2000, the Baptist congregation in Guliston was denied registration, ostensibly on the grounds that its proposed church was in a residential area.

Although two congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses are registered, eight others that have attempted to register during the period covered by this report were unsuccessful. Church officials believe that the fact that many members of these groups are ethnic Uzbeks (while the pastors of these groups are not ethnic Uzbeks) is at the root of the bureaucratic obstructionism that they encounter. The Government's Committee on Religious Affairs (CRA) denied the Greater Grace Christian Church of Samarkand permission to have a Finnish, rather than Uzbek, pastor. The Church's application for registration therefore is blocked until this issue is resolved. In March 2001, the CRA stated that the Government planned to instruct Christian congregations with foreign pastors to replace their pastors with Uzbek citizens. The CRA maintained that graduates of a registered Korean Christian seminary in the country could replace the foreign pastors.

In November 2000, the Ministry of Justice ruled that the Tashkent International Protestant Church could not be registered because its members were not Uzbek citizens. However, the CRA gave permission for the Church to meet and hold services. The Church has appealed to the Presidential Commission on the Implementation of the Religion Law, which has authority to grant exceptions to the requirements of the law. However, since that appeal, the Commission has not met.

While supportive of moderate Muslims, the Government is intolerant of Islamic groups that attempt to operate outside the state-run Muslim hierarchy. The Government controls the content of imams' sermons and the volume and substance of published Islamic materials. At the beginning of 1998, the Government ordered the removal of loudspeakers from mosques in order to prevent the amplified public announcement of calls to prayer. The Government permanently closed several hundred unauthorized mosques during 1998. The authorities suspect Muslims who meet pri-

vately to pray or study Islam of being extremists, and such believers are at risk of arrest.

The Government is determined to prevent the spread of ultraconservative or extremist varieties of Sunni Islam, which it labels "Wahabbism" and considers a security threat. President Islam Karimov frequently has declared the Government's intention to rid the country of Wahhabists and underground Islamic groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Government considers these groups to be political and security threats and represses them severely. Hizb ut-Tahrir members desire an Islamic government and the group's literature includes much anti-Western, anti-Semitic, and antidemocratic rhetoric, but they deny that they advocate violence. Some independent Muslims deny that they are extremists and claim that they are being persecuted for their religious beliefs.

The Koran reportedly is banned in most detention facilities.

Religious groups are prohibited from forming political parties and social movements.

Under the laws dealing with religion, only registered central offices of religious organizations are permitted to produce and distribute religious literature. Seven such offices have been registered to date: a nondenominational Bible society, two Islamic centers, and Russian Orthodox, Full Gospel, Baptist, and Roman Catholic offices. However, the Government discourages and occasionally has blocked registered central offices from producing or importing Christian literature in the Uzbek language even though Bibles in many other languages are available in Tashkent bookstores. The Government bans the teaching of religious subjects in schools and also prohibits the private teaching of religious principles.

Although authorities tolerate the existence of many Christian evangelical groups, they enforce the law's ban on proselytizing. The Government often monitors and harasses those who openly try to convert Muslims to Christianity. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses claim that they are subjected routinely to police questioning, searches, and arbitrary fines. Several churches, including the Baptist church in Gazalkent, have reported that local officials did not accept membership lists that included Uzbek names.

In July 2000, police closed a summer youth camp sponsored by the registered Korean Christian church "Mir" in Nukus, Kakalpakstan. In August Karakalpak authorities revoked the church's registration and ordered Pastor Vladimir Kim to close it on the grounds that the camp had taught religion to minors without parental consent, a violation of the religion law. Kim maintained that all of the minor's parents had signed consent forms. Although the church was allowed to reopen in January 2001, it has not been reregistered.

In December 2000, local police and justice department officials ordered the closure of a training facility for Adventist clergy in Navoi. The authorities who ordered the closure cited the 1998 Religious Law that prohibits groups that do not have a registered religious center from training religious personnel.

On May 17, 2001, the Ministry of Justice informed in writing the Baptist Union that the holding of Sunday School classes for the children of congregation members was a violation of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations. The letter threatened revocation of the Baptist Union's registration if it did not immediately cancel Sunday School. The Baptist Union responded to the letter and, in turn, received another letter from the Ministry still refusing to allow the Sunday School classes.

Also in May 2001, the Roman Catholic parish in Ferghana received an order from the regional Prosecutor General to close its Sunday School on the grounds that the school was an institution of higher learning and had not been registered properly. However, later in the month the CRA found that the Catholic Sunday School was not a formal institution, had been closed improperly, and should be allowed to reopen. Sunday School classes resumed at the school.

In 1999 the international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Human Rights Watch compiled a list of 28 confirmed cases from 1997 and 1998 in which university and secondary school students were expelled for wearing religious dress. (Only clerics may wear religious clothing in public.) Several of these students from Tashkent's Oriental Studies Institute brought suit in civil court to be reinstated but were unsuccessful, and they had not been reinstated as of the end of the reporting period.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government continued to commit numerous serious abuses of religious freedom. The Government's campaign against independent Muslim groups, begun in the early 1990's, resulted in numerous serious human rights abuses during the period covered by this report. The campaign was directed at three types of Muslims: alleged Wahhabists, including those educated at madrassas (schools) abroad and fol-

lowers of missing imams Nazarov of Tashkent and Mirzaev of Andijon; those suspected of being involved in the 1999 Tashkent bombings or of being involved with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), whose roots are in Namangan; and suspected members of Hizb ut-Tahrir throughout the country.

Because it is likely that those responsible for the 1999 bombings were members of a political organization with religious ties, the Government considers so-called Wahhabists as closely connected to terrorism even when they are not. Both groups, the Wahhabists and those suspected of involvement in the bombings, stem from the growth of independent Islam that the Government has sought to suppress since the early 1990's. The distinction is that the Government considers the Wahhabists to be extremists and potential terrorists and those suspected of involvement in the bombings to be active terrorists.

The Government does not consider repression of these groups to be a matter of religious freedom, but instead to be directed against those who oppose the political order. However, authorities are highly suspicious of those who are more pious than is the norm, including frequent mosque attendees, bearded men, and veiled women. In practice this approach results in abuses against many devout Muslims for their religious beliefs.

There were credible reports that police mistreatment resulted in the deaths of persons in custody. Law enforcement officials regularly beat and torture suspects held in pretrial detention—including those accused of religious extremism—in order to extract confessions. Severe mistreatment of convicted prisoners is also common. Although there is specific information available on only a few deaths from mistreatment in custody, human rights observers claim that the number of such cases throughout the country during the period covered by this report is much higher. Law enforcement officials have been known to threaten families not to talk about their relatives' deaths.

On July 7, 2001, the body of Shovruk Ruzimuradov was returned to his family from police detention. Police reportedly beat and tortured Ruzimuradov to death. Ruzimuradov, a human rights activist and opposition figure known to be a pious Muslim, was arrested on June 15, 2001 by an assault team of 31 police officers armed with automatic weapons. After searching his house, police claimed to have found nine Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets as well as 28 bullets and narcotics. Relatives reported that the police had planted the contraband themselves. According to NGO reports, police detained, threatened, and blocked the road against human rights activists and opposition figures who attempted to travel to Ruzimuradov's funeral. An official investigation of his death concluded that Ruzimuradov committed suicide. Nonetheless, four officials were dismissed for mishandling Ruzimuradov's detention, and disciplinary actions were taken against others.

On February 28, 2001, well-known writer Emin Usman died in pretrial detention; he was being held by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to Memorial, a Moscow-based human rights organization, his body featured a large open wound on the back of the head. Authorities who returned the body told Usman's family that he had committed suicide, although the official death certificate listed a brain tumor as the cause of death. Usman allegedly was involved with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

In late December 2000, Habeebullah Nosirov, a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir who was convicted in 1999, died in prison in Jaslik. According to the family of the deceased, he died of injuries sustained from severe beatings by police while he was in prison. Habeebullah Nosirov was the brother of Haffezullah Nosirov, who was the "Amir" or chief of the Hizb ut-Tahrir organization in the country until he was arrested and tried earlier in the year.

On October 8, 2000, the body of Numon Saidaminov, Haffezullah Nosirov's alleged successor as Amir of Hizb ut-Tahrir, was returned to his family from detention by the National Security Service (NSS). Although officials stated that he died of a heart attack, a doctor who examined the body allegedly confirmed that the cause of death was a severe beating that occurred 2 days prior to the examination. Saidaminov's body had open wounds and bruises on the fingernails, anus, and the bottoms of the feet, which are consistent with sexual violence and torture.

There were no new reports of disappearances of religious leaders during the period covered by this report. It is believed widely that Imam Abidkhon Nazarov, who has been missing since March 5, 1998, fled the country to avoid arrest and was not abducted by security forces. During the period covered by this report, there were no reported developments in the 1995 disappearance of Imam Abduvali Mirzaev, the 1997 disappearance of his assistant, Nematjon Parpiev, or the 1992 disappearance of Aboullah Utaev, leader of the Uzbekistan chapter of the outlawed Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). Most independent observers believe that the three missing Islamic activists are either dead or in custody.

There was one report of a person who disappeared after being taken into custody. Plainclothes police officers apprehended Bakhodir Khasanov, an instructor of French at the Alliance Francaise, in front of witnesses on July 17, 2000. The authorities have not acknowledged that he is being held in detention. This is the fourth time that the authorities have detained Khasanov. The security services' interest in Khasanov apparently stems from the fact that many members of the Khasanov family are pious Muslims, although acquaintances claimed that Bakhodir was not especially religious. Bakhodir's father and brother both are imprisoned. His brother Ismail was convicted in August 1999 for alleged links to Islamic extremists and was retried on additional charges of involvement in events in Yangiabad, although these events took place while he was in prison. In November 1999, police arrested Khasanov's 70-year-old father after planting Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets on him. He signed a confession after police forced him to watch them beating his son Ismail, and he is serving 3 years in prison.

The security services have arrested, detained, and harassed Muslim leaders for perceived acts of insubordination and independence. On April 9, 2001, a Tashkent court convicted former Imam Abdulvakhid Yuldashev, a former associate of missing Imam Nazarov, along with 12 other defendants. Yuldashev was sentenced to 19 years in prison for organizing an underground Islamic militant group. He was arrested in June 2000, held incommunicado for several months, and was denied access to a lawyer during most of his pretrial detention in the basement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). In mid-August, the MVD investigator in the case allowed a meeting with lawyer Hamid Zainutdinov, but Yuldashev declined the lawyer's services. Zainutdinov later wrote an appeal to the Prosecutor General stating that it was evident by the wounds on his feet and by his demeanor that Yuldashev had been tortured and forced to refuse counsel. In court Yuldashev described how investigators had beaten him and burned his genitals in order to extract confessions during detention. The judge declined to investigate these charges. Evidence at the trial consisted almost entirely of statements by the other prisoners who also claimed in court to have been beaten in detention.

The Koran reportedly is banned in most detention facilities and there are numerous reports that Muslims in places of detention are punished severely if they are caught praying.

Arbitrary arrest and detention of Muslim believers is common. Following both the December 1997 murder of police officials in Namangan and the February 1999 terrorist bombings in Tashkent, police detained hundreds and perhaps thousands of suspected Wahhabists. The majority of those detained were released after questioning and detention that lasted as long as 2 months. The police routinely planted narcotics, ammunition, and, beginning in 1999, religious leaflets, on citizens to justify their arrests. According to human rights activists, the police arrested many of those whose religious piety, sometimes indicated by their dress or beards, made them suspect to the security services.

To determine whom to arrest, the Government used the local mahalla (neighborhood) committees as a source of information. Shortly after the February 1999 Tashkent bombings, President Karimov directed that each committee assign a "defender of the people," whose job it was to ensure that young persons in the neighborhoods were not joining independent Islamic groups. The committees identified for police those residents who appeared suspicious. Human rights observers noted that in practice the committees often suspected those same individuals who already had been detained by the police in the wake of either the 1997 murders of officials in Namangan or the Tashkent bombings, and who subsequently had been released because there was no case against them. During the period covered by this report, there were dozens of cases in which persons who had previously been detained and released were retried.

The absence of a free press and the rarity of public trials make it impossible to determine how many persons have been incarcerated. Nonetheless, the Moscow human rights center, Memorial, has compiled a list of over 1,400 names of persons arrested and convicted for political and religious reasons from January 1999 until April 2000. The number of those in pretrial detention is unknown but is probably several hundred persons. Nearly all those listed were accused of being Muslim extremists. Some human rights groups have speculated that the total of those in custody is in the tens of thousands. By the end of June 2001, the Government had convicted at least 140 persons for direct involvement in the bombing plot. Of these, at least 20 received death sentences and most of these are believed to have been executed.

Although the Constitution provides for the presumption of innocence, the system of justice operates on the assumption that only the guilty are brought to trial. To bolster this claim, government officials point out that since the bombings, approxi-

mately 5,000 persons who were detained later were released. According to government officials, most of these persons were released after they renounced their allegiance to Islamist groups and pledged never again to engage in anti-State activities, while others were released for lack of evidence.

The Government typically held unannounced trials of large groups of alleged extremists, and rarely allowed international observers to attend. Human rights observers contended these groupings of defendants were arbitrary, since the prosecution only occasionally argued that those on trial actually were connected to one another. Defendants often claimed that the confessions on which the prosecution typically based its cases were extracted by torture. Judges ignored these claims and invariably convicted the accused, handing down severe sentences—usually from 15 to 20 years' imprisonment.

In one such trial, which ended on November 24, 2000, a court sentenced 23 defendants accused of establishing a criminal Wahhabist organization in Kokand between 1989 and 1992 to between 16 and 20 years in prison. Eleven of the defendants were already in prison on charges related to the same alleged activities. Among the defendants were five brothers of Khamramon Khamidov, who died—reportedly from mistreatment—in prison in 1998. Defendants and witnesses said during the trial that their signatures on statements written before the trial were extracted under duress. The defendants admitted that they established an organization that, until forced to disband in 1992, opposed criminality and corruption in Kokand but committed no actions against the State.

Accused Hizb ut-Tahrir members also were tried in large groups, claimed mistreatment, and were sentenced to lengthy jail terms. In a trial which ended on May 17, 2001, a court sentenced all but 1 of 24 alleged members of Hizb ut-Tahrir to between 8 and 18 years in prison for anti-State activities, including belonging to a religious fundamentalist group. The court convicted the remaining defendant under a lesser charge and released him under amnesty. One of the defendants, Odiljon Umarov, was 17 years old and received an 8-year sentence. His father also was arrested and scheduled for trial in May 2001. Another defendant, Mirzakarim Avasov, who denied belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir, was the younger brother of Hizb ut-Tahrir member Mirzafar Avasov, who had been arrested in January 2000. According to persons familiar with the case, Mirzakarim originally was taken into custody in order to help investigators extract a confession from his older brother. Members of the National Security Service reportedly tortured Mirzakarim with electric shocks in front of his brother until Mirzafar agreed to sign a statement incriminating himself and others.

The Avasov case was typical of a trend of arresting family members of persons who are wanted by the authorities but are at large, or even of persons already in jail. Typically, while the fugitives or previously imprisoned persons may have admitted being involved in religious groups, their family members deny involvement. The motive in arresting family members in the former category appears to be to hasten the apprehension of fugitives. Imprisoning family members of those already in jail reportedly is based on the belief that aggrieved relatives may turn against the State.

One such case occurred during the investigation of Nahmiddin Juvashev, who was in pretrial detention in late 2000. According to Human Rights Watch, Juvashev originally was arrested in 1999 when, believing the Government's promise of amnesty for repentant Islamists, he turned himself in as a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir to the Jizzak office of the NSS. The NSS officials allegedly tortured him in detention, and the court sentenced him to 9 years in prison. In August 1999, he was released after the Supreme Court overturned his conviction on the basis of the promised amnesty; however, he was rearrested in the summer of 2000. On September 6, the authorities arrested Juvashev's brother Idrisbek Umarkulov when, in the course of a search (allegedly conducted without a warrant) of the Juvashev family home, NSS officers claimed to find a sawed-off shotgun and bullets for another weapon. Family members and witnesses claimed that the officers planted the items in the house.

In July 2000, a court convicted Kamoletdin Sattarov of Andijon of anti-State activity after police allegedly planted two Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets on him. The authorities had jailed his brother Muradjon in 1999 for membership in the Hizb ut-Tahrir. Kamoletdin has admitted that Muradjon was involved with the group but denied that he shared his brother's political or religious beliefs. Investigators in Kamoletdin's case found individual appeal forms of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in his home and used them as evidence against him during his trial.

All adult male members of the family of missing Imam Abidkhon Nazarov remain in jail and allegedly are beaten periodically by interrogators trying to learn Nazarov's whereabouts.

Human rights observers noted an increase in the number of women arrested during the year for their alleged involvement with religious groups. Rahima Ahmadalievna was arrested on March 17, 2001, and reportedly is held in the basement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tashkent. Ahmadalievna is the wife of Imam Ruhiddin Fahriddinov, who was accused by the Government of "Wahhabism" and is believed to be in hiding. On March 20, Ahmadalievna's daughter Odina Makhsudova was detained briefly and forced to give a statement that incriminated her mother. Makhsudova alleged later that police were verbally abusive to her and her mother, forced them to remove their headscarves, and threatened to rape them. She claimed that her mother was mistreated physically. She quoted police officials as saying that her mother would be freed as soon as her father turned himself in.

In another case, prosecutors brought charges against Feruza Kurbanova for alleged membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir. The trial, which was well-attended by international observers, ended in March, when the judge dismissed two of the three charges and sentenced Kurbanova only to probation on the third charge. Kurbanova's husband is serving an 8-year sentence for his alleged involvement in the organization.

On March 21, 2001, police in Andijon broke up a demonstration of 200–300 women and children whose relatives were imprisoned for allegedly distributing Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets. Three women were arrested during the protest and were detained for 1, 3, and 20 nights in jail respectively. On March 23, the women tried to assemble again, but police reportedly ordered many of them into waiting buses. However, none of the women were arrested. On April 12, 2001, similar protests occurred in Tashkent and Andijon. Police, wielding batons, broke up the Tashkent protest violently, injuring numerous demonstrators. One demonstrator was arrested. On July 2, women attempted to hold protests at the Andijon and Tashkent city halls. Police and security forces were well prepared for the would-be demonstrators and forced them into waiting buses before they could assemble.

There were few reports of human rights abuses against members of minority religions during the period covered by this report; however, police occasionally broke up meetings of unregistered groups. Leaders of such groups have been assessed fines or have been imprisoned. In June 2001 in Tashkent, the head of the local mahalla told Baptist Pastor Nikolai Shevchenko that he faced an 8-year prison term for leading an unregistered church; however, at the end of the reporting period the legal case against Shevchenko was dropped. Local authorities also filed charges against 10 other members of the Baptist Church; however, these charges were dropped. In August 2000, police allegedly detained for 2 days a group of unregistered Baptists meeting in a private apartment in Chirchik, during which the police allegedly beat them. After a similar incident in October 1999 in Karshi, the Committee on Religious Affairs claimed that it took steps to ensure that police allow such Baptist congregations, which consider registration to be inconsistent with their religious beliefs, to meet undisturbed for worship.

In July 2000, police in Nukus, Karakalpakstan, arrested Nikolai Rudinsky, pastor of a small, unregistered Baptist group, after allegedly planting narcotics in his bicycle pack; he was released in late September 2000.

An ethnic Korean Christian pastor, Stanislav Kim, was released from prison under amnesty in October 2000. In February 1999, a court convicted Kim on charges of tax evasion and financial impropriety. Acquaintances of Kim believe that he was jailed in part because local officials believed that Kim's religious activities conflicted with his duties as a director of a state concern.

The authorities have attempted to silence human rights activists who criticize government repression of religious Muslims and others. In December 2000, the Government pardoned and released imprisoned human rights activist Mahbuba Kasimova. However, on April 26, 2001, militia detained her for 3 hours and questioned her about her attendance at trials of "religious persons" and her contacts with relatives of defendants. The officers warned her to cease her human rights monitoring activities. Human rights activist Ismail Adylov was released from jail on July 3. He was arrested in July 1999, after police allegedly planted 100 Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets among his effects to justify the arrest (Adylov was not known to be religious). In September 1999, a remote regional court sentenced him to 6 years in prison for allegedly possessing incriminating papers.

The Government is suspicious of all religious literature that does not emanate from the Muftiate. Possession of tracts by authors deemed to be Wahhabist can lead to arrest and prosecution. Hundreds of Uzbeks have been imprisoned for possessing or distributing Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets, which are both political and religious in content. Others have been imprisoned for possessing Islamic texts in Arabic.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

There were several cases during the reporting period of persons brought to trial for involvement in religious extremist organizations who were granted parole or amnesty. Among these were Feruza Kurbanova, five of the defendants in the trial of Imam Abduvakhid Yuldashev, and one of the 24 defendants in the May 17 Hizb ut-Tahrir case in Tashkent. While there have been cases in the past of prosecutors declining to prosecute persons, according to human rights observers these were the first cases of a judge giving light sentences in religious cases. In September 2000, Baptist Pastor Nikolai Rudinsky, who had been arrested on false charges, was released after U.S. Embassy intervention.

The Government's Center for Human Rights and the Committee on Religious Affairs sponsored a series of three roundtables to foster inter-confessional dialog. Participants from minority religions noted that these were opportunities to speak openly about restrictions on religious freedom.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. There is no pattern of discrimination against Jews. Synagogues function openly; Hebrew education, Jewish cultural events, and the publication of a community newspaper take place undisturbed. However, many Jews are emigrating because of bleak economic prospects and because of their connection to families abroad. Jewish leaders in Samarkand reported that anti-Semitic fliers signed by the Hizb ut-Tahrir have been distributed throughout the country.

Members of ethnic groups that traditionally are associated with Islam who convert to Christianity sometimes encounter particular societal and low-level governmental hostility.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy is engaged actively in monitoring religious freedom issues and problems and maintains contact with both government and religious leaders. The Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Newly Independent States met with the Foreign Minister on three occasions during the period covered by this report. In each of these meetings, he expressed U.S. support for freedom of opinion and religion. In September 2000, the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom met with the Uzbek Ambassador to raise current issues. Officials in Washington have met on several occasions with Uzbek embassy officials to convey U.S. concerns regarding the state of religious freedom. The U.S. Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission discussed religious freedom on at least six occasions with the Foreign Minister and other officials, as well as in the context of the U.S.-Uzbek human rights working group.

In November 2000, the Ambassador met with the Deputy Director of the Committee on Religious Affairs in the Cabinet of Ministers. The Embassy's human rights officer maintains regular contact with the Committee on Religious Affairs as well as religious leaders and human rights activists.

After the U.S. Embassy intervened following the arrest of Pastor Nikolai Rudinsky in Nukus (see Section II), the Government quickly released him.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Federal and Republic law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Yugoslavia) and the constituent Republic of Serbia generally respect this right in practice; however, under the Milosevic government—prior to October 5, 2000—there were incidents of government infringement on freedom of worship, and the federal and republic level legal systems provided little protection for the religious rights of minority groups. The Government of the Republic of Montenegro generally respects religious rights in practice. There is no state religion in the country; however, the Serbian Orthodox Church receives preferential treatment. In Kosovo, the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), charged under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 with the administration of the territory, con-

tinued to work to secure peace and foster respect for human rights regardless of ethnicity or religion. Nonetheless, there were attacks by Albanian Muslims against Orthodox Serbs during the period covered by this report in retribution for the massive human rights abuses conducted by Yugoslav and Serbian authorities against Albanians prior to June 1999.

The status of respect for religious freedom by both the Federal and Serbian Republic Governments improved somewhat during the period covered by this report, following former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's electoral defeat by Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition on September 24, 2000. Officials of the new Government expressed a commitment to improving respect for human rights and to eliminating discrimination; however, in practice the new Government has provided preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The views of ethnic groups in the region historically have been influenced strongly by religion, and most instances of ethnic discrimination have at least some religious roots. There were some instances of societal discrimination against religious minorities in Serbia. In Kosovo societal tensions were particularly noticeable and caused security for Serbs and other minorities to worsen during the period covered by this report. Numerous Orthodox Churches in Kosovo were attacked, presumably by ethnic Albanian extremists, although the number of such attacks decreased. In Montenegro tensions between the unofficial (because it is not recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul) Montenegrin Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church continued and were politicized by opposing political factions, despite the Montenegrin Government's attempts to moderate the situation.

The U.S. Government encourages the Yugoslav Government to promote ethnic and religious tolerance the country. Since diplomatic relations were reestablished in November 2000, Embassy officials have met with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities in Serbia and Montenegro and with government officials to promote respect of religious freedom and protection of human rights. The U.S. Government also supports UNMIK and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), including their efforts to protect Orthodox churches, shrines, and other religious sites to prevent any renewed outbreak of attacks on such sites.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 39,500 square miles and has a population of approximately 10,662,000. The predominant faith in the country outside of Kosovo is Serbian Orthodoxy, although religion is not a significant factor in public life. Those Serbs who profess a religion predominantly are Serbian Orthodox and make up approximately 65 percent of the population. Montenegrins, who constitute about 6 percent of the total population and live mainly in Montenegro, also primarily follow Serbian Orthodoxy. The Muslim population, composed mostly of Slavic Muslims who live predominantly in the Sandzak region bordering Serbia and Montenegro, and ethnic Albanians located primarily in Kosovo, constitutes about 19 percent of the total population. Like Serbs and Montenegrins, many Muslims in the country are not religious, and the term "Muslim" is often more a reference to ethnic identity than to religious belief. About 4 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, and consist of ethnic Hungarians who live primarily in Vojvodina, ethnic Albanians, and Croats who live in Vojvodina and scattered communities in Montenegro. About 1 percent of the population is Protestant. Other minority religious groups make up another 12 percent of the population.

Missionaries from a number of different groups are present in the country, including members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and a range of evangelical Protestant Christians (including Baptists, Evangelical Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Reform Christians).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The law in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as in the constituent republics of Serbia and Montenegro, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, up to October 2000, under the Milosevic government, the Government and the legal system provided very little protection for the religious rights of minority groups in those areas under the Serbian Government's administration. There is no state religion; however, the Serbian Orthodox Church receives preferential treatment.

Although in the past the Milosevic government was allied closely with and gave preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church, a split between the two

widened considerably in 2000. Since assuming office, Federal President Kostunica has increased the profile of the Serbian Orthodox Church in public life, and has made high-profile visits to major Serbian Orthodox religious sites. He also has expressed his support for introducing religious education in schools, instituting religious services into the Yugoslav army (VJ), and returning confiscated property to the Serbian Orthodox Church. State-run television broadcasts religious coverage on major Serbian Orthodox holidays. In November 2000, both the Federal and Serbian Republic level Ministries of Religious Affairs announced their support for introducing voluntary religious education in primary and secondary schools, with the support of the Serbian Orthodox, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Jewish religious communities. Some Protestant groups and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) expressed concern for these plans, fearing that non-Orthodox children would be stigmatized. During the period covered by this report, the Federal and Republic Ministries for Religious Affairs were in the process of preparing a draft law on religious education in schools for approval by the Ministry of Education, but no law was passed.

Religious groups are required to apply to the Federal Ministry for Religious Affairs in order to be recognized in the country. The Federal Ministry has denied recognition to the Montenegrin Orthodox Church as a religion on the basis that no Orthodox body has granted recognition to the organization. There were no other reports of applications that were denied during the period covered by this report.

In Montenegro the Constitution specifically recognizes the existence of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but not other faiths. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church is registered with the Government of Montenegro Ministry of Interior in Cetinje, the former capital, as an NGO. The Government of Montenegro has remained officially neutral in the dispute between followers of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Montenegrin Orthodox Church. Political parties have used this issue in pursuit of their own agendas. Pro-Serbian parties strongly support moves for the establishment of the Serbian Orthodox Church as an official state religion, while pro-independence parties have pushed for the official recognition of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church. Members of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church worship freely, and generally worship in those churches (formerly Serbian Orthodox) whose memberships have elected to align themselves with the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

In Kosovo applicable law, as defined by UNMIK regulation, incorporates international human rights conventions and treaties, including those provisions that protect religious freedom and prohibit discrimination based on religion and ethnicity. Both UNMIK and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) officially promote respect for religious freedom and tolerance in administering Kosovo and in carrying out programs for its reconstruction and development.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In March 2001, VJ announced its intention to introduce Serbian Orthodox chaplains into its military units. The VJ had not yet decided whether Catholic priests and Muslim imams also would be represented in the Army Chaplaincy. According to the Keston Institute, some representatives of minority religious groups and NGO's expressed concern that by favoring the majority religion the VJ is not protecting equal religious rights for all soldiers.

Under the Milosevic government, there was no progress in the restitution of property that belonged to the Jewish community prior to World War II, despite President Milosevic's past promises to resolve the disputes. The Orthodox and Catholic Churches have had similar difficulties with the restitution of their property confiscated by the Communist regime (1944–89). Federal President Kostunica made public statements supporting the restitution of confiscated property; however, no progress was reported at the end of the period covered by this report.

When it suited its political aims, the Milosevic government did not hesitate to attack verbally the Serbian Orthodox Church, which became outspoken in its criticism of the regime during the period covered by this report. The Church openly called for Milosevic to step down in 1999 as a result of his failed national policies, and the Church demonstrated tacit support for President Kostunica during the September 2000 Federal elections.

Protestants and foreign clergy actively practice and proselytize. Missionaries from a number of different groups are present in the country, including members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and a range of evangelical Protestant Christians (including Baptists, Evangelical Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Reform Christians). However, some of these groups have complained of societal discrimination.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

From 1992 until October 2000, the Milosevic government attempted to suppress all of its enemies in the country, Serb and non-Serb alike. To achieve his political ends, Milosevic exploited ethnic, religious, and political divisions through his control of the media and the organs of state security. The focus of this suppression was primarily along ethnic lines, and in general encompassed religion only as a component of ethnicity.

Prior to their expulsion from Kosovo in June 1999, Serbian Interior Ministry troops, police, and paramilitary formations committed widespread and severe abuses against Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population. The regime attempted to rid the province of almost its entire ethnic Albanian population, killing thousands of ethnic Albanians and forcing nearly one million to become refugees. This ethnic cleansing was distinct from religiously motivated violence; however, because most Kosovar Albanians are Muslim, the Serbian campaign also resulted in deliberate destruction of mosques and other Islamic landmarks.

For similar reasons, under the Milosevic government, police repression continued against ethnic and religious minorities elsewhere in Serbia. There were reports of harassment of Bosniak Muslims by Serb authorities in the Sandzak region along the border between Serbia and Montenegro. In August 2000, the police arrested members of the moderate Sandzak Democratic Party (SDP) who were distributing party leaflets for the September Federal elections. Their campaign materials were confiscated and the members were released a few hours later. Under the new Government, reports of police repression of Bosniak Muslims in the Sandzak have ceased.

In Kosovo the withdrawal of Serbian troops in 1999 and establishment of UNMIK resulted in an improved situation for the majority, largely Muslim, ethnic Albanian population. One of the most serious challenges facing the international community in its administration of Kosovo has been to stop attacks on Orthodox churches and shrines and on the Orthodox population of Kosovo (see Section III).

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

Under the new democratically-elected Government, much of the repression of ethnic and religious minorities that occurred under Milosevic ceased, and respect for religious freedom improved. Reports of police abuses against Bosniak Muslims in the Sandzak region have ceased. The number of attacks on Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo, presumably by ethnic Albanian extremists, decreased significantly during the period covered by this report.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Ethnicity and religion are intertwined closely throughout the country. In many cases it is difficult to clearly identify discriminatory acts as primarily religious or primarily ethnic in origin. However, the incidents of discrimination and harassment of religious minorities that occurred during the period covered by this report appear to have been based primarily on ethnicity rather than religion.

The Keston Institute reported that on September 26, 2000, a group of 13 young men attacked two Romani women and one Romani man, all members of a Romani Pentacostal church in Leskovac, with sticks, bats, and chains. The attack took place 2 days after three young men interrupted the church's evening services and threatened the congregation, throwing firecrackers and shouting that they would force the Roma to leave town. The church reported the incidents to the local police, who advised them to file charges against the men. No further information concerning the case was available, and no further incidents were reported by the end of the period covered by this report.

Societal harassment of the Catholic minority in Vojvodina, largely consisting of ethnic Hungarians and Croats, was reported. In early 2000, Catholic churches frequented by the Croat minority were attacked; however, there were no reports of this type of activity during the period covered by this report. Ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina, most of whom are at least nominally Catholic, as well as Catholic Croats allege discrimination in employment. In April 2000, unidentified assailants disrupted a debate on religion organized by the Catholic Church in Novi Sad. The police intervened and restored order.

Bosniak Muslims in the Sandzak region allege discrimination in housing, employment, health care, commerce, and education.

A number of anti-Semitic incidents occurred during the period covered by this report. Early in 2001, there were reports of anti-Semitic leaflets circulated in Kikinda.

On February 13 and 14, 2001, stickers with swastikas and anti-Semitic messages were placed on the entrance of the Jewish Community of Belgrade, on the gate of the synagogue, and on the fence of the Jewish cemetery. A similar incident had occurred earlier during the winter. Jewish community members believe the perpetrators were members of a radical nationalist group. President Kostunica publicly condemned the acts. Also in February 2001, a memorial plate hung at the site of a former synagogue in Zrenjanin was broken. The incident was reported to the police but the perpetrators were not found. On May 8, 2001, in Subotica in Vojvodina, unknown assailants attacked and beat a Jewish community leader for the second time (a similar attack had occurred 3 weeks earlier). The victim was a lawyer who represented opposition members during the Milosevic government. A police investigation was initiated. Members of the Jewish community also charged that the "Palma" television station has aired programs with guests who openly expressed anti-Semitic ideas. For example, Dragos Valajic, a Serb nationalist, spoke of the "Jewish conspiracy" on one program.

Ethnicity and religion also are closely intertwined in Kosovo. Muslim Kosovars generally are not religious. Kosovar Serbs identify themselves with the Serbian Orthodox Church, which defines not only their religious but also their cultural and historical perspectives. During and after the conflict, some Orthodox leaders played a moderating political role, but most have since withdrawn from public life as secular Serb leaders have stepped forward. Societal violence against Serbs continued to decrease steadily during the course of the period covered by this report, although this positive trend was marred periodically by surges of ethnically motivated violence, such as the February 2001 bombing of a bus carrying Kosovar Serbs coming from Nis, which killed 10 persons. While these incidents were ethnically, not religiously, motivated, security concerns had a chilling effect on the Serb community and their freedom of movement, which also affected their freedom to worship. Serb families with relatives living in both Kosovo and Serbia are restricted by security concerns from traveling to join them for religious holidays or ceremonies, including weddings and funerals.

In July 2000, the now-defunct daily *Dita* published an article, with photographs, alleging that Orthodox priests committed war crimes. The Serbian Orthodox Church denied that the photographs depicted any known priests. Two ethnic Albanians were arrested for subsequently attacking and injuring a priest and two seminarians in a drive-by shooting. One suspect was sentenced in absentia; the other was acquitted.

Attacks on Serbian Orthodox churches, presumably by ethnic Albanian extremists, continued during the period covered by this report, although these incidents decreased significantly. On September 1, 2000, the Orthodox church in Musnikovo, near Prizren, was damaged and desecrated. On December 22, 2000, unknown assailants threw a hand grenade at the only functioning Serbian Orthodox church in Pristina, breaking windows and causing other damage. On February 7, 2001, unknown assailants planted a bomb in an Orthodox church in the village of Gornji Livoc, destroying it. The Keston Institute reported that local police prevented a similar church attack in Gornja Kufca/Kusce. On February 8, 2001, unknown assailants reportedly fired shots at the Draganac monastery. Also in February 2001, ethnic Albanians attacked the last remaining Serb village in the Dukagjin Valley (Rahovac/Orahovac). Mortar rounds fell in fields near the houses and next to an Orthodox cemetery.

In light of societal violence in Kosovo against properties owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian Orthodox religious symbols, UNMIK authorities took extra steps to protect religious sites and to ensure that members of all religious groups could worship safely. KFOR deployed security contingents at religious sites throughout the province to protect them from further destruction, such as that which had occurred immediately after KFOR's intervention in June 1999. KFOR remains solely responsible for guarding all Serbian Orthodox patrimonial sites, although it has proposed to UNMIK that this function gradually be handed over to the indigenous Kosovo Police Service.

Islamic, Orthodox, and Catholic religious leaders have tried to encourage tolerance and peace in Kosovo, in both the religious and political spheres.

There were few reported instances of abuses based on religion in the Republic of Montenegro. Relations between religious communities generally are peaceful in Montenegro. Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox communities coexist within the same communities and often use the same municipally owned properties to conduct worship services. However, during the period covered by this report, tensions continued to rise between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the self-proclaimed Montenegrin Orthodox Church. There were a few incidents of violence between the supporters of these two competing Orthodox churches. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church has claimed holdings of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The Serbian Or-

thodox Church remains the predominant faith in Montenegro and has rejected the property claims.

Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are officially registered religions in Montenegro. However, their followers report that their efforts to build and renovate churches have been impaired by persons they believe to be loyal to the local Serbian Orthodox Church. A local NGO reported that unknown assailants burned a Seventh-Day Adventist church in Niksic at the end of 2000. The perpetrators were not found.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has sought to promote ethnic and religious tolerance in the country. The absence of diplomatic relations before November 2000 limited severely the U.S. Government's ability to engage directly with religious representatives except in Kosovo, where U.S. Office officials have maintained close contacts with religious leaders. Since the reestablishment of diplomatic relations, Embassy officials have met with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities and with officials of the new Government to promote respect of religious freedom and protection of human rights. The Secretary of State removed the formal identification of the Milosevic government in Serbia—identified in 1999 and 2000 as a “particularly severe violator” of religious freedom—in January 2001 after Vojislav Kostunica was elected president.

In July 2000, the U.S. Government sponsored a conference at Airlie House that brought together Kosovar Albanian and Serb civil society and political leaders to discuss reconciliation, tolerance and a joint vision for Kosovo's future. Orthodox religious leaders participated in the Airlie House process. In December 2000, the U.S. funded a Democracy Commission grant to Radio KIM (Radio Caglavica), based at Gracanica Monastery. Serbian Orthodox Bishop Artemije's clerical staff runs the station, and it broadcasts news, music, interviews, and cultural programs. Bishop Artemije visited Washington D.C. in February 2001 and met with Secretary of State Colin Powell, who repeated the strong messages in support of ethnic tolerance that Secretary Albright delivered last year. U.S. KFOR peacekeeping troops have worked to prevent ethnic and religious violence in Kosovo and have guarded religious sites. The U.S. is involved actively in UNMIK, the interim administration mission in Kosovo, which is aimed at securing peace, facilitating refugee return and reconstruction, laying the foundations for democratic self-government in the province, and fostering respect for human rights regardless of ethnicity or religion.

In Montenegro the U.S. Government seeks to ensure respect for human rights, including religious freedom and has provided significant support and assistance to the republic government.

NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

ALGERIA

The Constitution declares Islam to be the state religion but prohibits discrimination based on religious belief, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Islam is the only state-sanctioned religion, and the law limits the practice of other faiths; however, the Government follows a de facto policy of tolerance by not inquiring into the religious practices of individuals. Self-proclaimed radical Muslim terrorists continue to justify their killing of security force members and civilians by referring to interpretations of religious texts; however, the level of violence perpetrated by terrorists declined during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions contributed to religious freedom. A very small number of citizens practice nonmainstream forms of Islam or other religions, and there is minimal societal discrimination against them.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 6,406,880 square miles and its population is approximately 31,194,000. The vast majority of citizens belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. Official data on the number of non-Muslim residents is not available. Many citizens who practice non-Muslim faiths have fled the country as a result of the civil war; thus, the number of Christians and Jews in the country is significantly lower than the estimated total before 1992. The small Christian community, which is predominantly Roman Catholic, has approximately 25,000 members, and the Jewish community numbers perhaps fewer than 100. There are no reliable figures on the numbers of atheists in the country, and very few persons identify themselves as such. There is only one missionary group operating in the country on a full-time basis. Other evangelical groups travel to and from the country but are not established.

For security reasons, both Christians and Jews have concentrated in Algiers and the larger cities of Constantine and Oran. There also is a Christian community in the eastern region of Kabylie.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution declares Islam to be the state religion but prohibits discrimination based on religious belief, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions. Islam is the only state-sanctioned religion, and the law limits the practice of other faiths; however, the Government follows a de facto policy of tolerance by not inquiring into the religious practices of individuals. The small Christian and Jewish populations generally practice their faiths without government interference. Missionary groups are permitted to operate without government interference as long as they are discreet. Most of the "home churches" in which Christians worship are in contact with the Government and none report feeling intimidated or threatened.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government appoints preachers to mosques and gives general guidance on sermons. The Government monitors activities in mosques for possible security-related offenses. Amendments to the Penal Code, which became law on June 27, 2001, established strict punishments, including fines and prison sentences for anyone

other than government-designated imams who preach in mosques. Harsher punishments were established for any person, including government-designated imams, if such persons act "against the noble nature of the mosque." The Ministry of Religious Affairs provides some financial support to mosques and has limited control over the training of imams.

The law prohibits public assembly for purposes of practicing a faith other than Islam. However, there are Roman Catholic churches, including a cathedral in Algiers (the seat of the Archbishop), which conduct services without government interference. In 1994 the size of the Jewish community diminished significantly, and its synagogue has since been abandoned. There are only a few smaller churches and other places of worship; non-Muslims usually congregate in private homes for religious services.

Islamic law (Shari'a) does not recognize conversion from Islam to any other religion; however, conversion is not illegal under the law. Conversions from Islam to other religions are rare. Due to safety concerns and potential legal and social problems, Muslim converts practice their new faith clandestinely.

Non-Islamic proselytizing is illegal, and the Government restricts the importation of non-Islamic literature for widespread distribution. Personal copies of the major works of other religions, such as the Bible, may be brought into the country. Occasionally such works are sold in local bookstores in Algiers, and in general, non-Islamic religious texts are no longer difficult to find. Non-Islamic religious music and video selections also are available. The Government prohibits the dissemination of any literature that portrays violence as a legitimate precept of Islam.

Because Islam is the state religion, the country's education system is structured to benefit Muslims. Education is free to all citizens below the age of 16, and the study of Islam is a strict requirement in the public schools, which are regulated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Private primary and secondary schools were permitted to operate for the first time in 1990, with the first private primary school opening in 1992. Now both private primary and private secondary schools operate in the country; however, private school students find it more difficult than other students to register for official national examinations.

Some aspects of Shari'a as interpreted and applied in the country discriminate against women. The 1984 Family Code, which is based in large part on Shari'a, treats women as minors under the legal guardianship of a husband or male relative. For example, a woman must obtain a father's approval to marry. Divorce is difficult for a wife to obtain except in cases of abandonment or the husband's conviction for a serious crime. Husbands generally obtain the right to the family's home in the case of divorce. Custody of the children normally is awarded to the mother, but she may not enroll them in a particular school or take them out of the country without the father's authorization. Only males are able to confer citizenship on their children. Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims; Muslim men may marry non-Muslim women.

Women also suffer from discrimination in inheritance claims; in accordance with Shari'a, women are entitled to a smaller portion of an estate than are male children or a deceased husband's brothers. According to Shari'a, such a distinction is justified because other provisions require that the husband's income and assets be used to support the family, while the wife's remain, in principle, her own. Women may take out business loans and are the sole custodians of their dowries. However, in practice women do not always have exclusive control over assets that they bring to a marriage or income that they earn themselves. Females under 19 years of age may not travel abroad without their husbands' permission.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The country's 9-year civil conflict has pitted self-proclaimed radical Muslims against moderate Muslims. Approximately 100,000 civilians, terrorists, and security forces have been killed during the past 9 years. Extremist self-proclaimed Islamists have issued public threats against all "infidels" in the country, both foreigners and citizens, and have killed both Muslims and non-Muslims, including missionaries. Extremists continued attacks against both the Government and moderate Muslim and secular civilians; however, the level of violence perpetrated by these terrorists declined during the period covered by this report. The majority of the country's terrorist groups do not, as a rule, differentiate between religious and political killings. In the majority of cases during the period covered by this report, in which both security forces and civilians died at the hands of terrorists, the preferred methods of assault were knifings (particularly throat-slitting) and shootings. Terrorists, often claiming religious justification for their actions, set up false roadblocks to kill civilians and security force personnel. Terrorists also killed villagers and shepherds in their homes and fields, with firearms and knives.

During the period covered by this report, an indeterminate number of persons were serving prison sentences because of their alleged Islamist sympathies or membership in Islamist groups that commit or endorse terrorists acts; however, there were no reports of cases in which it was clear that persons were arrested or detained based solely on their religious beliefs.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general noncitizens who practice faiths other than Islam enjoy a high level of tolerance within society; however, citizens who renounce Islam generally are ostracized by their families and shunned by their neighbors. The Government generally does not become involved in such disputes. Converts also expose themselves to the risk of attack by radical extremists.

The majority of cases of harassment and security threats against non-Muslims come from radical Islamists who are determined to rid the country of those who do not share their extremist interpretation of Islam (see Section II). However, a majority of the population subscribes to Islamic precepts of tolerance in religious beliefs. Moderate Islamist religious and political leaders have criticized publicly acts of violence committed in the name of Islam.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. However, because the country was rated as a "critical threat" post during the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy's staff level was one-third the size that it would have been under normal circumstances. Officers were confined to the embassy grounds and moved outside its walls, almost exclusively for business purposes, with armed escorts. For practical and logistical purposes, the Embassy could not maintain regular contact with leaders in the Muslim community or with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Nevertheless, the Embassy tracked human rights issues, including religious freedom, as closely as possible under these restrictive working conditions.

The U.S. Embassy maintained frequent contact with the National Observatory for Human Rights (ONDH), a quasigovernmental institution that was established by the Government in response to international and domestic pressure to improve Algeria's human rights record. The Embassy assisted, wherever possible, to augment the ONDH's ability to address human rights abuses. Although officially disbanded, the ONDH continues to function and embassy personnel continue to remain in contact with it and its leadership.

The Embassy maintained strong and close contact with religious leaders in the non-Muslim community, who cite the dangers posed by radical Islamists as their principal concern regarding the safe practice of their faith. The Embassy maintains contact with several moderate Islamist organizations, including a social service non-governmental organization and a scholarly institute.

BAHRAIN

The Constitution states that Islam is the official religion and also provides for freedom of religion; however, there were some limits on this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In the past, the Government did not tolerate political dissent, including from religious groups or leaders; however, by February 14, 2001, the Amir had pardoned and released all remaining political prisoners and religious leaders. The Government continues to subject both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims to governmental control and monitoring, and there is some government discrimination against Shi'a Muslims. Members of other religions who practice their faith privately do so without interference from the Government.

Relations among religions in society are generally amicable; however, Shi'a Muslims, who constitute the majority of the population, sometimes resent minority Sunni Muslim rule.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 231 square miles, and its population is approximately 700,000. The citizen population is 98 percent Muslim; Jews and Christians constitute the remaining 2 percent. Muslim citizens belong to the Shi'a and Sunni branches of Islam, with Shi'a constituting as much as two-thirds of the indigenous population.

Foreigners, mostly from South Asia and other Arab countries, constitute approximately 38 percent of the total population. Roughly half of resident foreigners are non-Muslim, including Christians, Jews, Hindus, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

There is no information available regarding the numbers of atheists in the country.

The American Mission Hospital, which is affiliated with the National Evangelical Church, has operated in the country for over a century. The church adjacent to the hospital holds weekly services and also serves as a meeting place for other Protestant denominations.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution states that Islam is the official religion and also provides for freedom of religion; however, there were some limits on this right. In the past, the Government did not tolerate political dissent, including from religious groups or leaders; however, by February 14, 2001, the Amir had pardoned and released all political prisoners and detainees, including Shi'a clerics. The Government continues to subject both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims to governmental control and monitoring, and there is some government discrimination against Shi'a Muslims. Members of other religions who practice their faith privately do so without interference from the Government, and are permitted to maintain their own places of worship and display the symbols of their religion.

Every religious group must obtain a permit from the Ministry of Justice and Islamic affairs in order to operate. Holding a religious meeting without a permit is illegal. There were no reports of religious groups being denied a permit.

The High Council for Islamic Affairs is charged with the review and approval of all clerical appointments within both the Sunni and Shi'a communities, and maintains program oversight for all citizens studying religion abroad.

The civil and criminal legal systems consist of a complex mix of courts, based on diverse legal sources, including Sunni and Shi'a Shari'a (Islamic law), tribal law, and other civil codes and regulations.

The Government has declared the Shi'a religious celebration of Ashura to be a 2-day national holiday and allows Shi'a to stage public demonstrations during the holiday. As a gesture of continued conciliation toward the Shi'a community, the Amir donated rice and lamb to approximately 500 Shi'a community centers for the 2001 Ashura.

Notable dignitaries from virtually every religion and denomination visit the country and frequently meet with the Government and civic leaders.

In 1999 Amir Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa publicly called for religious tolerance, and in November of the same year, he met with Pope John Paul II and established diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government funds, monitors, and closely controls all official religious institutions. These include Shi'a and Sunni mosques, Shi'a Ma'tams (community centers), Shi'a and Sunni Waqfs (charitable foundations), and the religious courts, which represent both the Ja'afari (Shi'a) and Maliki (Sunni) schools of Islamic jurisprudence. While the Government rarely interferes with what it considers legitimate religious observations, it has, in the past, actively suppressed any activity deemed overtly political in nature. The Government permits public religious events, most notably the large annual commemorative marches by Shi'a, but such events are monitored closely by the police.

In the past, the Government occasionally closed mosques and Ma'tams for allowing political demonstrations to take place on or near their premises or to prevent religious leaders from delivering political speeches during Friday prayer and sermons; however, there were no reported closures of Ma'tams or mosques during the period covered by this report. In past years, the Government detained religious leaders for delivering political sermons or for allowing such sermons to be delivered in their mosques. The Government also has appropriated or withheld funding in order to reward or punish particular individuals or places of worship. However, there were

no reports of such detentions or funding restrictions during the period covered by this report.

There are no restrictions on the number of citizens permitted to make pilgrimages to Shi'a shrines and holy sites in Iran, Iraq, and Syria, although stateless residents who do not possess Bahraini passports often have difficulties arranging travel to religious sites abroad. However, the Government began to address the problem during the period covered by this report by granting citizenship to over 4,000 previously stateless residents. The Government monitors travel to Iran and scrutinizes carefully those who choose to pursue religious study there.

Although there are notable exceptions, the Sunni Muslim minority enjoys a favored status. Sunnis predominate because the Sunni ruling family is supported by the armed forces, the security service, and powerful Sunni and Shi'a merchant families. Sunnis receive preference for employment in sensitive government positions and in the managerial ranks of the civil service. Shi'a citizens are not allowed to hold significant posts in the defense and internal security forces. However, since April 1999, Shi'a have been allowed to be employed in the enlisted ranks of the Bahrain Defense Force and with the Ministry of the Interior, two bodies in which Shi'a had been denied employment during previous years.

The political dynamic of Sunni predominance in the past has led to incidents of unrest between the Shi'a community and the Government. There were no reports of significant political or religious unrest during the period covered by this report.

The Government discourages proselytizing by non-Muslims and prohibits anti-Islamic writings. However, Bibles and other Christian publications are displayed and sold openly in local bookstores that also sell Islamic and other religious literature. Religious tracts of all branches of Islam, cassettes of sermons delivered by Muslim preachers from other countries, and publications of other religions are readily available. However, a government-controlled proxy server prohibits user access to internet sites considered to be antigovernment or anti-Islamic. The software used is unreliable and often inhibits access to uncontroversial sites as well.

Shari'a governs the legal rights of women. Specific rights vary according to Shi'a or Sunni interpretations of Islamic law, as determined by the individual's faith, or by the courts in which various contracts, including marriage, have been made. While both Shi'a and Sunni women have the right to initiate a divorce, religious courts may refuse the request. Although local religious courts may grant a divorce to Shi'a women in routine cases, occasionally Shi'a women seeking divorce under unusual circumstances must travel abroad to seek a higher ranking opinion than that available in the country. Women of either branch may own and inherit property and may represent themselves in all public and legal matters. In the absence of a direct male heir, a Shi'a woman may inherit all property. In contrast, a Sunni woman—in the absence of a direct male heir—inherits only a portion as governed by Shari'a; the balance is divided among brothers, uncles, and male cousins of the deceased.

In divorce cases, the courts routinely grant Shi'a and Sunni women custody of daughters under the age of 9 and sons under age 7, although custody usually reverts to the father once the children reach those ages. In all circumstances except mental incapacitation, the father, regardless of custody decisions, retains the right to make certain legal decisions for his children, such as guardianship of any property belonging to the child, until the child reaches legal age. A noncitizen woman automatically loses custody of her children if she divorces their citizen father.

Some women complain that admission polices at the National University are aimed at increasing the number of male students at the expense of qualified female applicants, especially Shi'a women. Nevertheless, women make up the majority of students at the country's universities.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Until February 14, 2001, the Government had held in detention hundreds of Shi'a, including religious leaders, for offenses involving "national security." In June 1999, the Government gradually began releasing incarcerated individuals as part of an Amiri decree calling for the release or pardon of more than 350 Shi'a political prisoners, detainees, and exiles. In December 1999 and during 2000, the Amir pardoned at least another 350 prisoners. On February 6, 2001, the Amir pardoned an additional 298 political prisoners and detainees, and pardoned 108 exiles who had requested to return to the country. By February 14, 2001, the Amir had pardoned and released all political prisoners and detainees, including Hassan Sultan and Haji Hassan Jasarallah, two Shi'a clerics associated with prominent cleric Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, as well as Shi'a religious leader Shaikh Abdul Wahab Hussein, who had been in detention for more than 5 years.

On March 8, 2001, Bahraini cleric Shaikh Issa Qassim, the former head of the Shi'a Religious Party, returned to the country after an 8-year exile. The Government permitted large crowds of celebrating Shi'a to greet Qassim upon his return.

In July 1999, the Amir pardoned Al-Jamri, who had been in prison since 1996. After his release, the Government has monitored Al-Jamri's movements. It also denied him the right to issue marital status certificates, a lucrative source of income for many clerics. However, since January 2001, the Government has ceased conducting surveillance of Al-Jamri's residence and permitted him to lead Friday noon prayers.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners during the period covered by this report whose imprisonment could be attributed solely to the practice of their religion.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although there are notable exceptions, the Sunni Muslim minority enjoys a favored status. In the private sector, Shi'a tend to be employed in lower paid, less skilled jobs. Educational, social, and municipal services in most Shi'a neighborhoods, particularly in rural villages, are inferior to those found in Sunni urban communities. In an effort to remedy social discrimination, the Government has built numerous subsidized housing complexes, which are open to all citizens on the basis of financial need. In order to ease both the housing shortage and strains on the national budget, in 1997 the Government revised its policy to permit lending institutions to finance mortgages on apartment units.

Converts from Islam to other religions are not well tolerated by society, but some small groups worship in their homes.

After demonstrations in support of Palestinians on October 13, 2000, several youths and men reportedly boarded a bus carrying Catholic parishioners, took Bibles from the parishioners, and threw some of the Bibles out of the bus window.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

An official written dialog takes place between U.S. Embassy officials and government contacts on matters of religion. One such example is the memorandum received by the Embassy each year from the Government in response to the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for Bahrain.

EGYPT

The Constitution provides for freedom of belief and the practice of religious rites; however, the Government places restrictions on this right. Under the Constitution, Islam is the official state religion and the primary source of legislation. Accordingly religious practices that conflict with Islamic law (Shari'a) are prohibited. However, in the country the practice of Christianity or Judaism does not conflict with Shari'a and, for the most part, members of the non-Muslim minority worship without harassment and maintain links with coreligionists in other countries.

There was a trend toward improvement in the Government's respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Public schools began using curricular materials on Coptic history, the Government implemented policies facilitating church repairs, and seven Christians became deputies in the People's Assembly (3 were elected and four were appointed by the President). There was continued press and public discussion of intercommunal relations and religious discrimination. Nevertheless there were some Government abuses and restrictions on the right to religious freedom. In January 2001, security authorities arrested 18 citizens, most of them Baha'is, on suspicion of "insulting religion;" 10 remained in detention without charge at the end of the period covered by this report. During the period covered by this report, several intellectuals faced trial or charges related to writings or statements on the subject of religion. Government discrimination against non-Muslims persisted.

Religious discrimination in society is a problem about which many citizens agree more needs to be done; however, many argue that development of the economy, polity, and society is the most effective and enduring way to abolish prejudice. In Feb-

bruary 2001, a criminal court acquitted 92 of 96 defendants suspected of crimes committed while participating in violence in the village of Al-Kush in January 2000 that resulted in the deaths of 20 Christians and 1 Muslim. In September 2000, a criminal court convicted 20 persons and acquitted 19 of crimes including assault and arson committed in the neighboring village of Dar Al-Salaam. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Court of Cassation was considering whether to order a retrial of the 92 suspects who had been acquitted of participation in the violence in Al-Kush.

The subject of religious freedom remains an important and active part of the bilateral dialog between the U.S. and Egyptian Governments. Senior Administration officials, the U.S. Ambassador, and members of Congress have raised U.S. concerns about religious discrimination with President Hosni Mubarak and other senior government officials. In March 2001, members of U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom visited the country and discussed religious freedom issues with a variety of Egyptian Government and non-governmental representatives.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 370,308 miles, and its population is between 66 and 67 million. Most citizens, approximately 90 percent, are Sunni Muslims. There is a small number of Shi'a Muslims who constitute less than 1 percent of the population. Approximately 8 to 10 percent of the population are Christians, the majority of whom belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church. Other Christian communities include the Armenian, Chaldean, Greek, Maronite, Roman, and Syrian Catholic Churches. An evangelical Protestant church, first established in the middle of the 19th century, has grown to a community of 17 Protestant denominations. There also are followers of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which was granted legal status in the 1960's. The non-Muslim, non-Coptic communities range in size from several thousand to hundreds of thousands. The number of Baha'is has been estimated at between several hundred and a few thousand. The Jewish community numbers fewer than 200 persons. There are very few atheists.

Christians are geographically dispersed throughout the country, although the percentage of Christians tends to be higher in upper (southern) Egypt and some sections of Cairo and Alexandria.

There are many foreign missionary groups that work within the country, especially Roman Catholics and Protestants who have had a presence in the country for 100 years or more, although their mission involves education more than proselytizing. The Government generally tolerates missionary groups if they do not proselyte actively.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of belief and the practice of religious rites; however, the Government places restrictions on this right. Under the Constitution, Islam is the official state religion and the primary source of legislation. Accordingly religious practices that conflict with Shari'a are prohibited; however, in the country the practice of Christianity or Judaism does not conflict with Shari'a and, in general, members of the non-Muslim minority worship without harassment and maintain links with coreligionists in other countries.

The Constitution requires schools to offer religious instruction. Public and private schools provide religious instruction according to the faith of the student.

The religious establishment of Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Awqaf engage in interfaith discussions both domestically and abroad. First Lady Suzanne Mubarak has supported the development of reading and other curricular materials that advocate tolerance, which are distributed under her patronage by literacy projects aimed at girls.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

All mosques must be licensed, and the Government is engaged in an effort to control them legally. The Government appoints and pays the salaries of the imams who lead prayers in mosques and monitors their sermons. In December 2000, the Minister of Awqaf announced that of the more than 70,000 mosques in the country, the Government controls 52,000 mosques and 11,000 mosques located in private buildings. In an effort to combat extremists, the Government has announced its intention to bring all nongovernment mosques under its control by 2002.

An 1856 Ottoman decree still in force requires non-Muslims to obtain a presidential decree to build a place of worship. In addition Interior Ministry regulations issued in 1934 specify a set of 10 conditions that the Government must consider

prior to issuance of a presidential decree permitting construction of a church. These conditions include the location of the proposed site, the religious composition of the surrounding community, and the proximity of other churches. The Ottoman decree also requires the President to approve permits for the repair of church facilities.

In December 1999, in response to strong criticism of the Ottoman decree, President Mubarak issued a decree making the repair of all places of worship subject to a 1976 civil construction code. The decree is significant symbolically because it places churches and mosques on equal footing before the law. The practical impact of the decree has been to facilitate significantly church repairs; however, Christians report that local permits still are subject to security authorities' approval. During the period covered by this report, the President approved a total of 38 permits for church-related construction, including 3 permits for the construction of new churches; 5 permits for demolition and reconstruction of churches; 21 permits for churches previously constructed without authorization, 7 permits for construction of additional church facilities; and 2 permits for comprehensive renovation. The Government reported that governors issued more than 350 permits for church-related repair in 2000, an increase of 150 over those issued in 1999.

However, the approval process for church construction continued to be time consuming and insufficiently responsive to the wishes of the Christian community. Although President Mubarak reportedly has approved all requests for permits presented to him, Christians maintain that the Interior Ministry delays—in some instances indefinitely—submission to the President of their requests. They also maintain that security forces have blocked them from utilizing permits that have been issued, and that local security officials at times blocked or delayed permits for repairs to church buildings. For example, a permit issued in 1993 to repair structural damage to a 110-year-old church in a village next to Luxor remains unenforced due to “security reasons.” During the summer of 2000, newspapers published a May 22 letter from the secretary general of Assiyut governorate to the head of the Assiyut counsel directing that all church repair requests be screened by security before being approved. However, in two cases during the period covered by this report, President Mubarak took corrective action to overturn decisions by local authorities. In February 2001, the governor of Qalyubia ordered the demolition of a church building, and in March 2001, he ordered a halt to construction of another church building. On both occasions, President Mubarak intervened by revoking the orders and ordering the reconstruction of the demolished building at the Government's expense.

As a result of these restrictions, some communities use private buildings and apartments for religious services. In March 2001, the Government donated a plot of land to the Christian community to build a church in the city of Al-Tour in the Sinai. The authorities had closed the community's previous church in February 2000 for lack of a permit. During the period covered by this report, a new large Christian church was constructed in the neighborhood of Al-Qalag in the city of Shebin Al-Qanater in Qalubiya governorate; security forces had closed the Christian community's historic church in that area in 1989.

In January 1996, human rights activist Mamdouh Naklah filed suit challenging the constitutionality of the Ottoman decree's 10 conditions governing the building of places of worship for non-Muslims. In December 1998, an administrative court referred Naklah's case to the State Commissioner's Office, which in September 2000, recommended rejecting the suit on the grounds that Naklah had no standing to file suit. In October 2000, upon receiving a rebuttal from Naklah, the court returned the case to the State Commissioner's Office, and requested an opinion on the constitutionality of the 10 conditions. The State Commissioner's Office had not issued an opinion on this matter by the end of the period covered by this report.

In 1960 President Gamal Abdel Nasser issued a decree (Law 263 for 1960) banning Baha'i institutions and community activities. All Baha'i community properties, including Baha'i centers, libraries, and cemeteries, were confiscated. This ban has not been rescinded.

Political parties based on religion are illegal. Pursuant to this law, the Muslim Brotherhood is an illegal organization. Muslim Brothers speak openly and publicly about their views, although they do not explicitly identify themselves as members of the organization, and they remain subject to government pressure. Seventeen independent candidates backed by the Muslim Brotherhood were elected to the People's Assembly in the November 2000 parliamentary elections.

During the year, several authors faced trial or charges related to writings or statements considered heretical. In May 2001, a lawyer sued feminist Nawal Al-Saadawi for allegedly insulting Islam in comments she made during a magazine interview, and claimed that Al-Saadawi was an apostate and should be forcibly divorced from her Muslim husband. In June 2001, the Public Prosecutor rejected the

complaints. The lawyer also filed an apostasy suit against Al-Saadawi in the Cairo Personal Status Court, which postponed a decision on the matter until July 2001.

Various ministries legally are authorized to ban or confiscate books and other works of art upon obtaining a court order. The Islamic Research Center at Al-Azhar University has legal authority to censor, but not to confiscate, all publications dealing with the Koran and Islamic scriptural texts. In recent years, the Center has passed judgment on the suitability of nonreligious books and artistic productions. For example, the Islamic Research Center at Al-Azhar University ruled in 1999 in favor of distribution of the book "My Father Adam: The Story of the Creation Between Legend and Reality," written by Abdel Sabour Shahine. An Islamist lawyer sued the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and several other senior Islamic figures in an effort to block publication of the book; the Court of First Instance rejected the suit in November 2000 and the plaintiff appealed the decision the same month. The Court of Appeals rejected the plaintiff's appeal on June 18, 2001.

In 1995 an administrative court ruled that the sole authority to prohibit publication or distribution of books and other works of art is vested in the Ministry of Culture. This decision invalidated a 1994 advisory opinion by a judiciary council that had expanded Al-Azhar's censorship authority to include visual and audio artistic works. The same year, President Mubarak stated that the Government would not allow confiscation of books from the market without a court order, a position supported by the then-Mufti of the Republic, who is now the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar.

In 1997 human rights activist Mamdouh Naklah filed suit seeking removal of the religious affiliation category from government identification cards. Naklah challenged the constitutionality of a 1994 decree by the Minister of Interior governing the issuance of new identification cards. In March 1998, the court referred the case to the State Commissioner's Office, which had not issued an opinion by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Constitution provides for equal public rights and duties without discrimination due to religion or creed, and in general, the Government upholds these constitutional protections; however, government discrimination against non-Muslims exists. There are no Christians serving as governors, presidents of public universities, or deans. There are few Christians in the upper ranks of the security services and armed forces. Although there was improvement in a few areas, government discriminatory practices include: Suspected statistical underrepresentation of the size of the Christian population; failure to admit Christians into public university training programs for Arabic language teachers (because the curriculum involves the study of the Koran); discrimination against Christians in the public sector; discrimination against Christians in staff appointments to public universities; and payment of Muslim imams through public funds (Christian clergy are paid by private church funds).

Anti-Semitism is found in the Government press and increased in late 2000 and 2001 following the outbreak of violence in the Israel and Occupied Territories (see Section III). In April 2001, columnist Ahmed Ragheb lamented Hitler's failure to finish the job of annihilating the Jews. In May 2001, an article in Al-Akhbar attacked Europeans and Americans for believing in the false Holocaust. The Government has advised journalists and cartoonists to avoid anti-Semitism.

In May 2001, the Administrative Court of the State Council (which hears disputes between the Government and citizens) overturned an August 2000 decision by the Ministry of Social Affairs barring human rights activist Mamdouh Naklah from membership on the board of the Youssef Al-Ramy Organization, a Christian charitable association operating in Cairo. The court rejected as inadequate the "security reasons" cited by the Ministry for barring Naklah's membership.

In 1996 upon agreement with Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda, the Minister of Awqaf, Hamdy Zaqzouq, established a joint committee to address a dispute with the Coptic Orthodox Church that originated in 1952. At that time, the Government seized approximately 1,500 acres of agricultural land from the Church and transferred title to the Ministry of Awqaf, which is responsible for administering religious trusts. Based on the committee's recommendations, more than 800 acres have been returned to the Church during the last few years. The committee continued to review claims to the remaining disputed property. In August 2000, the Coptic Orthodox Church won a lawsuit to reclaim several plots of land in greater Cairo that had been seized by private or Government institutions before 1952.

According to a 1995 law, the application of family law, including marriage, divorce, alimony, child custody, inheritance, and burial, is based on an individual's religion. In the practice of family law, the State recognizes only the three "heavenly religions:" Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Muslim families are subject to the Personal Status Law, which draws on Shari'a (Islamic law). Christian families are subject to canon law, and Jewish families are subject to Jewish law. In cases of family

law disputes involving a marriage between a Christian woman and a Muslim man, the courts apply the Personal Status Law.

Under Islamic law, non-Muslim males must convert to Islam to marry Muslim women, but non-Muslim women need not convert to marry Muslim men. Muslim women are prohibited from marrying Christian men. Muslim female heirs receive half the amount of a male heir's inheritance, while Christian widows of Muslims have no inheritance rights. A sole female heir receives half her parents' estate; the balance goes to designated male relatives. A sole male heir inherits all his parents' property. Male Muslim heirs face strong social pressure to provide for all family members who require assistance; however, this assistance is not always provided. In January 2000, the Parliament passed a new Personal Status Law that made it easier for a Muslim woman to obtain a divorce without her husband's consent, provided that she is willing to forego alimony and the return of her dowry. However, an earlier provision of the draft law that would have made it easier for a woman to travel without her husband's consent, was rejected.

The Coptic Orthodox Church excommunicates women members who marry Muslim men, and requires that other Christians convert to Coptic Orthodoxy in order to marry a member of the church. The Coptic Orthodox Church does not permit divorce.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government occasionally prosecutes members of religious groups whose practices deviate from mainstream Islamic beliefs, and whose activities are believed to jeopardize communal harmony. For example, in January 2001, the Government arrested 18 persons in the southern Egyptian city of Sohag—most were Baha'is and some were Muslims—on suspicion of violating Article 98(F) of the Penal Code (“insulting a heavenly religion”) and other possible charges. By the end of the period covered by this report, 10 Baha'is remained in detention without being formally charged.

In June 2001, the Public Prosecutor referred to a State Security Court a group of 52 men arrested in Cairo in May 2001 on suspicion of homosexual activity and unorthodox religious practices. Two of the defendants, who allegedly advocated a belief system combining Islam and tolerance for homosexuality, were charged with “insulting Islam,” a violation of Article 98(F) of the Penal Code. Their trial was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. The remaining 50 detainees faced charges unrelated to religious beliefs or practices.

In October 2000, the Government released without charge 48 persons who had been arrested in March 2000 on suspicion of membership in a religious group established in 1969 by Salim Al-Faramawy; the group advocates the belief that members should isolate themselves from the State and society and abjure the use of science and technology, including medicine. Faramawy also advocated the consumption of dogs and cats, a practice prohibited by Islam. After Faramawy's death in 1991, his son-in-law, Mohamed Gouda, reportedly assumed leadership of the group.

On November 11, 1999, the State Security Prosecutor arrested 50 persons in Cairo suspected of heresy against Islam. On November 15, 1999, 30 of the detainees were released and the remaining 20 were charged with degrading Islam, inciting strife, and meeting illegally. The lead defendant, a woman named Manal Wahid Mana'a, who claimed that the Prophet Mohammed spoke to her, was accused of attempting to establish a new Islamic offshoot. On September 5, 2000, a State Security Emergency Court in Boulaq sentenced Mana'a to 5 years' hard labor, 3 other defendants to 3 years' hard labor, 7 to 1 year of hard labor, 2 to 6 months in prison, and 2 to a fine of \$375 (1000 Egyptian pounds). One of the defendants died in prison, reportedly from ill health, during the investigation.

On January 27, 2001, a State Security Court sentenced Salaheddin Mohsen to 3 years in prison for “insulting Islam” through his writings. Mohsen originally had received a 6-month suspended sentence in a trial that ended in June 2000, but the Public Prosecutor appealed the sentence on the grounds that the sentence was too lenient and the Government ordered a retrial.

In June 2001, the Public Prosecutor ordered the release, pending an appeal, of author Ala'a Hamed, who had been convicted of insulting Islam in a novel in 1998; his appeal was pending at the end of the period covered by the report.

On July 16, 2000, the Dar Al-Salaam court sentenced a Christian, Suryal Gayed Ishak, to 3 years' hard labor for “insulting Islam” during a public dispute with a Muslim in 1999. Ishak's attorney appealed the conviction, claiming that Ishak was accused falsely. The Public Prosecutor appealed the sentence. On March 27, 2001, Suryal's sentence was reduced to 1 year and Suryal (who had been incarcerated for more than a year) was released.

Cairo University professor Nasr Abu Zeid and his wife continue to live abroad following the 1996 Court of Cassation ruling that affirmed lower court judgments that Abu Zeid is an apostate because of his controversial interpretation of Koranic teachings. In August 2000, the Supreme Constitutional Court rejected Abu Zeid's contestation of the constitutionality of the 1996 ruling.

In August 1999, the public prosecutor reopened and expanded an investigation of police torture of mostly Christian detainees that took place during the police investigation in August and September 1998 of the murder of Samir Aweda Hakim and Karam Tamer Aرسال in the largely Coptic village of Al-Kush in Sohag governorate. However, during the period covered by this report, the investigation reportedly made little progress. It is unclear whether religion was a factor in the 1998 actions of the police officers. Some human rights groups outside Egypt believe that religion was a factor in the Al-Kush murder investigation, but most human rights and Christian activists in the country do not. Police abuse of detainees is a widespread practice that occurs regardless of a detainee's religious beliefs.

On June 5, 2000, a criminal court in Sohag city convicted Shayboub William Aرسال of the 1998 murder of Hakim and Aرسال. The court sentenced Shayboub to 15 years hard labor. An appeal was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. The Christian community of Al-Kush believes that Shayboub, a Christian resident of Al-Kush, was accused and convicted of the crime because of his religion. The public prosecution in Sohag has taken no action on charges of witness tampering in Shayboub's trial that were raised in 1998 against Bishop Wisa and Arch-Priest Antonious.

Neither the Constitution nor the Civil and Penal Codes prohibit proselytizing. While no such incidents involving Christians were reported during the period covered by this report, in past years several dozen Christians who were accused of proselytizing were harassed by police or arrested on charges of violating Article 98(F) of the Penal Code, which prohibits citizens from ridiculing or insulting heavenly religions or inciting sectarian strife. In May 2001, authorities arrested five members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church while they were distributing leaflets to Christian families. The authorities claimed that the leaflets included criticism of the Catholic Church, which might incite strife among Christians. The five Adventists were released after pledging not to distribute such materials in the future.

While there are no legal restrictions on the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam, in past years police harassed Christians who had converted from Islam; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report. In cases involving conversion from Islam to Christianity, authorities in the past also have charged several converts with violating laws prohibiting the falsification of documents. In such instances, converts, who fear government harassment if they officially register the change from Islam to Christianity, have altered their identification cards and other official documents themselves to reflect their new religious affiliation. However, there were no reports of such charges during the period covered by this report. In August 2000, the Government lifted travel restrictions on two converts to Christianity who were imprisoned in 1991 and later released; the two subsequently were able to travel to other countries without harassment.

An estimated several thousand persons are imprisoned because of alleged support for or membership in Islamist groups seeking to overthrow the Government. The Government states that these persons are in detention because of membership in or activities on behalf of violent extremist groups, without regard to their religious affiliation. During the period covered by this report, security forces arrested large numbers of persons allegedly associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Most observers believe that the Government was seeking to undermine Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated candidates in the elections to the People's Assembly, the Shura Council, and professional syndicates.

In past years, Coptic Christians have been the objects of occasional violent assaults by the Islamic Group and other terrorists. Some Christians have alleged that the Government is lax in protecting Christian lives and property. However, there were no reports of terrorist attacks against Christians during the period covered by this report.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were reports of forced conversions of Coptic girls to Islam by Muslim men. Reports of such cases are disputed and often include inflammatory allegations and categorical denials of kidnapping and rape. Observers, including human rights groups, find it extremely difficult to determine whether compulsion was used, as most cases involve a Coptic girl who converts to Islam when she marries a Muslim boy. According to the Government, in such cases the girl must meet with her family, with her priest, and with the head of her church before she is allowed to convert.

There were no reports of forced religious conversion carried out by the Government. However, there are credible reports of Government harassment of Christian families that attempt to regain custody of their daughters, and of the failure of the authorities to uphold the law (which states that a marriage of a girl under the age of 16 is prohibited, and between the ages of 16 and 21 is illegal, without the approval and presence of her guardian) in cases of marriage between an underage Christian girl and a Muslim boy.

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

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, the Government took several steps to promote and improve religious freedom and tolerance. For example, government primary, middle, and secondary schools began using a new history curriculum incorporating the Coptic and Byzantine periods of Egyptian history. The curriculum was developed over several years with the advice and support of Christian intellectuals and the Coptic Orthodox Church.

President Mubarak's December 1999 decree making the repair of all places of worship subject to a 1976 civil construction code continued to facilitate church repairs. In two instances during the period covered by this report, President Mubarak intervened to reverse orders to demolish buildings belonging to Christians churches, in one of the cases ordering that a building be rebuilt at the government's expense.

In November 2000, three Christians were elected to the People's Assembly (the first to be elected to parliament in 10 years), and President Mubarak appointed an additional four Christians to the People's Assembly.

In contrast to previous years, there were no reports during the period covered by this report that converts to Christianity were subjected to harassment by the security services. Hassan Mohamed Ismail Mohamed, one of four converts previously prevented from traveling, was able to travel abroad in August 2000.

In May 2001, President Mubarak inaugurated a complex, run by the Ministry of Tourism, to support religious tourism in Old Cairo, a district that includes Christian, Jewish, and Muslim holy places. The Ministry of Housing and the organization American Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Athra Kadisha are expected to complete construction of a highway-bridge through the ancient Basatin Jewish Cemetery in Cairo in October 2001. The project is designed to be a modern highway—part of Cairo's Ring Road—that traverses a cemetery but respects Jewish religious strictures against moving or disturbing burial sites.

In September 2000, the Government extended official recognition to the Maadi Community Church, an independent interdenominational church, thereby allowing the church to buy property and hold services.

In May 2001, Minister of Culture Farouk Hosny declared the burial place of Rabbi Ya'coub Abu Hasira an official antiquity site protected by the Government.

Building on actions first taken in late 1999, government-owned television and radio continued to expand the amount of programming time devoted to Christian issues, including live broadcast of Christmas and Easter services and documentaries on the country's monasteries and other aspects of Christian history. In August 2000, a version of Sesame Street especially designed for the country by the Children's Television Workshop with assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) began broadcasting. Among the aims of the program is the promotion of tolerance, and one of the principal characters is a Christian. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in December 2000, the most popular miniseries on government television was a drama explicitly addressing issues related to Muslim-Christian relations in the country; the drama provoked widespread public debate in print and broadcast media. There were no discriminatory programs in the broadcast media. Government and independent newspapers published a broad spectrum of news and views on religious topics, including respectful debates between Christian and Muslim clerics.

The Minister of Education has developed and distributed curricular materials instructing teachers in government schools to discuss and promote tolerance in teaching.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Muslims and Christians share a common history and national identity. They also share the same ethnicity, race, culture, and language. Christians are geographically dispersed throughout the country, and Christians and Muslims live as neighbors. At times religious tensions flare up, and individual acts of prejudice occur. Members

of both faiths practice discrimination. The majority of citizens agree that more needs to be done to eliminate discrimination, but argue that development of the economy, polity, and society is the most effective and enduring way to abolish social prejudice.

On July 26, 2000, gunmen killed Christian farmer Magdy Ayyad Mus'ad and wounded five other persons in Giza province, allegedly because of objections to a church Mus'ad built. Authorities charged a person with the killing but released the suspect on bail in October 2000; by the end of the period covered by this report, no trial date had been set. On December 11, 2000, Father Hezkiyal Ghebriyal, a 75-year-old Coptic Orthodox priest, was stabbed and seriously wounded in the village of Bardis, near Sohag. Police arrested the suspected attacker. At the end of the period covered by this report the suspect remained in prison pending an ongoing investigation. Several other Christians were wounded in sectarian disputes in other provinces, including 4 in Fayoum in August 2000, 3 in Minya in October 2000, and 8 in Alexandria in December 2000. The authorities arrested Muslims and Christian suspects in several of these incidents, but all had been released by the end of the period covered by this report. The case of Ahmad and Ibrahim Nasir, who were sentenced to 7 years in prison for the September 1999 murder of a monk in Assiut, remained pending at the end of the period covered by this report. The Court of Cassation had not yet set a date to hear an appeal by the Public Prosecutor seeking a heavier sentence.

A trade dispute between a Christian clothing merchant and a Muslim customer that occurred on December 31, 1999, in the village of Al-Kush in Sohag governorate, escalated into violent exchanges between Muslims and Christians in the area, and resulted in the death of 21 Christians and 1 Muslim by January 2, 2000. The violence also resulted in the injuries to 39 persons in Al-Kush and 5 persons in the neighboring municipality of Dar Al-Salaam. Approximately 200 businesses and homes in the area were damaged.

On September 5, 2000, the Sohag Criminal Court convicted 20 defendants of the crimes committed in Dar Al-Salaam, including assault, arson, and vandalism (there were no deaths in Dar Al-Salaam) and acquitted 19 others. Four were convicted in absentia to 10 years in prison but were retried and acquitted upon turning themselves in to authorities. Four were sentenced to 2 years in prison, 11 to 1 year, and 1 to 6 months; the sentences were criticized as too lenient by the Christian community. Ninety-six persons (58 Muslims and 38 Christians) were accused of crimes committed in Al-Kush, including 43 charged with murder or attempted murder. On December 7, 2000, the Sohag court released all 89 defendants in custody (7 remained at large) on personal recognizance, reportedly to allow them to spend Muslim and Christian holidays with their families. On February 5, 2001, the court handed down the verdicts, acquitting 92 of the 96 defendants for the crimes committed in Al-Kush. One defendant was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 10 years in prison and 3 defendants were convicted of arson and sentenced to 1 year in prison. The lead judge justified the verdicts, citing inadequate evidence. On February 22, the Public Prosecutor contested the verdicts and called for a retrial before a different circuit. The Court of Cassation set a hearing date of May 21, 2001 to look into the case, postponing the verdict until July 30, 2001. The Christian community, including Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda, protested the initial verdicts in the Al-Kush case and expressed relief at the Public Prosecutor's contestation.

While there is no legal requirement for a Christian girl or woman to convert to Islam in order to marry a Muslim (see Section II), conversion to Islam is sometimes used to circumvent the legal prohibition on marriage between the ages of 16 and 21 without the approval and presence of the girl's guardian. Most Christian families would object to a daughter's wish to marry a Muslim; if a Christian woman marries a Muslim man, she is excommunicated by the Church. According to the Government, a Christian family whose minor daughter converts to Islam retains guardianship over her, but in practice local authorities sometimes allow transfer to a Muslim custodian, who is likely to grant approval for an underage marriage. The law is silent on the matter of the acceptable age of conversion. Ignorance of the law and social pressure, including the centrality of marriage to a woman's identity, often affect a girl's decision to convert (see Section II). Family conflict and financial pressure also are cited as factors.

Official relations between Christian and Muslim religious figures are amicable, and include reciprocal visits to religious celebrations. In 1998 a committee on dialog was established in 1998 by the Vatican and Al-Azhar, the country's foremost Islamic institution and a preeminent seminary of Sunni Islamic study. Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Awqaf engage in other interfaith discussions, both within the country and in other countries. The Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) supports the Forum for Intercultural Dialog. In February 2001, the Forum and the Ministry of Awqaf began a year-long program to reach common positions

on a number of issues of national importance. In May 2001, in collaboration with Alexandria University, the Forum held a 3-day conference entitled "The Role of the Library of Alexandria in Supporting a Culture of Dialogue and Tolerance." Dozens of prominent intellectuals, Muslim and Christian clerics, and journalists participated in the conference. Other informal interfaith discussions took place as well. For example, on June 28, 2001, Al-Azhar, the Ministry of Awqaf, and CEOSS held a conference at the Red Sea resort of Ain Sukhna; the conference emphasized themes of religious tolerance and unity in Egypt. Private Christian schools admit Muslim students, and religious charities serve both communities.

Anti-Semitism is found in both the government press and in the nonofficial press of the opposition parties, and increased in late 2000 and throughout 2001 following the outbreak of violence in Israel and the Occupied Territories (see Section II). However, there were no anti-Semitic incidents during the period covered by this report directed at the tiny Jewish community.

On June 17, 2001, the Al-Naba' newspaper published an article involving alleged sexual misconduct in a Coptic Orthodox monastery. The article provoked unusual demonstrations by Coptic Christians in Cairo from June 17 to 20, during which demonstrators criticized both the Government and the church leadership for treatment of a number of issues, including discrimination against Christians and the Al-Kush trial. On June 20, a demonstration at the Coptic Orthodox Church headquarters turned violent, and several demonstrators and police officers were hospitalized with minor injuries. Police detained 22 demonstrators on suspicion of illegal public assembly and damaging public property; by the end of the period covered by this report, 19 demonstrators had been released on bail awaiting trial and 3 remained in detention. All 22 of the demonstrators are charged with illegal assembly and damaging public property. On July 3, 2001, the remaining 3 demonstrators were released on bail. No information on the demonstrators' trial date was available by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Government reacted strongly to the story in Al-Naba'. The Coptic Orthodox Church promptly announced that the monk in question had been defrocked 5 years earlier and that it would sue Mamdouh Mahran, the publisher of al-Naba'. The Public Prosecutor referred Mahran to a State Security Court for trial on charges of undermining public order and social peace and spreading misinformation; the trial began June 24, 2001. The Speaker of the Shura Council also referred to the State Council Administrative Court a request to withdraw publishing licenses from Al-Naba' and its sister publication Akher Khabar. The case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The subject of religious freedom is an important part of the bilateral dialog. The subject has been raised at all levels of government, including by the President, Secretary of State, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, the U.S. Ambassador, and other embassy officials. The Embassy maintains formal contacts with the Office of Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition the Ambassador has discussed religious freedom with senior government officials and religious leaders. The Embassy also discusses religious freedom issues regularly in contacts with other government officials, including governors and Members of Parliament. Visiting congressional delegations have raised religious freedom issues during visits with government officials.

In January 2001, the Director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom visited the country and met with government officials and community activists. In March 2001, members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, including the Chairman and Vice Chairman, visited the country. Although some citizens and organizations boycotted the visit on the grounds that the Commissioners were interfering in the country's internal affairs, the commissioners met with a broad range of government ministers and other officials, Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, other Christian and Muslim clerics, and many private citizens concerned with religious freedom. The Commissioners and embassy staff also met with some imprisoned Baha'is (see Section II).

The U.S. Embassy maintains an active dialog with the leaders of the Christian and Muslim religious communities, human rights groups, and other activists. The Embassy investigates every complaint of religious discrimination brought to its attention. During a public speech in March 2001, the former U.S. Ambassador criticized anti-Semitism in the media. The Embassy also discusses religious freedom with a range of contacts, including academics, businessmen, and citizens outside of the capital area.

The U.S. Mission, including the Department of State and USAID, works to expand human rights and to ameliorate the conditions that contribute to religious strife by promoting economic, social, and political development. U.S. programs and activities support initiatives in several areas directly related to religious freedom.

The Mission is working to strengthen civil society, including training for non-governmental organizations (NGO's) that promote religious tolerance. In April 2000, the Nongovernmental Organization Service Center was funded by USAID to provide training, technical assistance, and grants to domestic NGO's. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Center had given over \$1 million in grants to 52 NGO's and had provided training for over 1,400 NGO representatives. The Embassy has nominated participants interested in advocacy for the State Department's International Visitor Program, and invited American specialists in this subject to speak in the country. In addition, USAID supports a major effort to improve the administration of justice, and State Department exchange activities promote legal reform and access to justice.

The U.S. Mission also promotes civic education. The public affairs section of the Embassy supports the development of materials that encourage tolerance, diversity, and understanding of others, in both Arabic-language and English-language curriculums. USAID, in collaboration with the Children's Television Workshop, developed an Egyptian version of the television program *Sesame Street*, which is designed to reach remote households and has as one of its goals the promotion of tolerance. The program began broadcasting in August 2000 and is estimated to reach one-third of school age children (see Section II). USAID also supports private voluntary organizations that are implementing innovative curriculums in private schools. The public affairs section of the Embassy is leading an effort to increase the professionalism of the press, with an emphasis on balanced and responsible coverage. Finally USAID is working with the Supreme Council of Antiquities to promote the conservation of cultural antiquities, including Islamic, Christian, and Jewish historical sites.

IRAN¹

The Constitution declares that the "official religion of Iran is Islam and the doctrine followed is that of Ja'fari (Twelver) Shi'ism." The Government restricts freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Members of Iran's religious minorities—including Baha'is, Jews, Christians, and Sufi Muslims—reported imprisonment, harassment, and/or intimidation based on their religious beliefs. At least 10 Baha'is were among those still imprisoned for reasons related to their faith, while 9 Jews remained in prison after being convicted for cooperating with a hostile government, belonging to an illegal organization, and recruiting members in an illegal organization.

Iranian Society is accustomed to the presence of Iran's pre-Islamic, non-Muslim communities. However, government actions create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities, especially Baha'is, Jews, and evangelical Christians. The Revolutionary Court's conduct of the trial of 13 Jews contributed to worsening societal attitudes toward the Jewish community.

The U.S. Government makes clear its objections to the Government's treatment of religious minorities in public statements, support for relevant U.N. and non-governmental organization (NGO) efforts, and diplomatic contacts with other countries.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Iran as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Secretary of State redesignated Iran in October 2000.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 631,663 square miles and its population is approximately 65,620,000. The population is approximately 99 percent Muslim, of which 89 percent are Shi'a and 10 percent are Sunni (mostly Turkomen, Arabs, Baluchs, and Kurds living in the southwest, southeast, and northwest). Sufi

¹The United States does not have an embassy in Iran. This report draws heavily on non-U.S. Government sources.

Brotherhoods are popular, but there are no reliable figures available to determine their true size.

Baha'is, Christians, Zoroastrians, Mandaeans, and Jews constitute less than 1 percent of the population. The largest non-Muslim minority is the Baha'i Faith, which has an estimated 300,000 to 350,000 adherents throughout the country. Estimates on the size of the Jewish community vary from 25,000 to 30,000. These figures represent a substantial reduction from the estimated 75,000 to 80,000 Jews who resided in the country prior to the 1979 Revolution. The Christian community is estimated at approximately 117,000 persons, according to government figures. Of these the majority consists of ethnic Armenians and Assyro-Chaldeans. There also are Protestant denominations, including evangelical churches. The Mandaean community is estimated at approximately 5,000 to 10,000 persons, who reside primarily in Khuzestan in the southwest.

The Government figures reported by the United Nations in 1996 place the size of the Zoroastrian community at approximately 35,000 adherents. Zoroastrian groups cite a larger figure of approximately 60,000, according to the same U.N. report. Zoroastrians are mainly ethnic Persians concentrated in the cities of Tehran, Kerman, and Yazd. Zoroastrianism was the official religion of the pre-Islamic Sassanid Empire and thus has played a central role in the country's history.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Government restricts freedom of religion. The Constitution declares that the "official religion of Iran is Islam and the doctrine followed is that of Ja'fari (Twelver) Shi'ism." It also states that "other Islamic denominations are to be accorded full respect," and designates Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as the only "recognized religious minorities," which, "within the limits of the law," are permitted to perform their religious rites and ceremonies and "to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education." Although the Constitution states that "the investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden" and that "no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief," the adherents of religions not specifically protected under the Constitution do not enjoy freedom of activity. This situation most directly affects members of the Baha'i Faith. The Government regards the Baha'i community, whose faith originally derives from a strand of Islam, as a misguided or wayward "sect." The Government fuels anti-Baha'i and anti-Jewish sentiment in the country for political purposes.

In his 1996 report to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Religious Intolerance recommended that "the ban on the Baha'i organization should be lifted to enable it to organize itself freely through its administrative institutions, which are vital in the absence of a clergy, so that it can engage fully in its religious activities." In response to the Special Rapporteur's concerns with regard to the lack of official recognition of the Baha'i Faith, government officials stated that the Baha'is "are not a religious minority, but a political organization which was associated with the Shah's regime, is against the Iranian Revolution and engages in espionage activities." According to the Special Rapporteur, government officials stated nonetheless that, as individuals, all Baha'is were entitled to their beliefs and were protected under other articles of the Constitution as citizens.

The central feature of the country's Islamic republican system is rule by a "religious jurisconsult." Its senior leadership, including the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, the President, the head of the judiciary, and the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), is composed principally of Shi'a clergymen.

Religious activity is monitored closely by the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance and by the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). Adherents of recognized religious minorities are not required to register individually with the Government; however, their community, religious, and cultural events and organizations, including schools, are monitored closely. Baha'is are not recognized by the Government as a legitimate religious group but are considered an outlawed political organization. Evangelical Christian groups have been pressured by government authorities to compile and submit membership lists for their congregations, but evangelicals have resisted this demand.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Religious minorities, by law and practice, are barred from being elected to a representative body (except to the seats in the Majles reserved for minorities, as provided for in the Constitution) and from holding senior government or military positions. Members of religious minorities are allowed to vote, but they may not run for

President. All religious minorities suffer varying degrees of officially sanctioned discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and housing.

Members of religious minorities generally are barred from becoming school principals. Applicants for public sector employment are screened for their adherence to Islam. The law stipulates penalties for government workers who do not observe "Islam's principles and rules." Religious minorities may not serve in the judiciary or the security services. The Constitution states that "the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be an Islamic army, i.e., committed to an Islamic ideology and the people, and must recruit into its service individuals who have faith in the objectives of the Islamic Revolution and are devoted to the cause of achieving its goals." Baha'is are prohibited from government employment.

University applicants are required to pass an examination in Islamic theology, which limits the access of most religious minorities to higher education (despite the fact that public school students receive instruction in Islam).

The Government allows recognized religious minorities to conduct the religious education of their adherents. This includes separate and privately funded Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian schools but not Baha'i schools. The Ministry of Education, which imposes certain curriculum requirements, supervises these schools. With few exceptions, the directors of these private schools must be Muslim. Attendance at these schools is not mandatory for recognized religious minorities. All textbooks used in course work, including religious texts, must be approved for use by the Ministry of Education. Religious texts in non-Persian languages require approval by the authorities for use. This requirement imposes sometimes significant translation expenses on minority communities.

Recognized religious minorities may provide religious instruction in non-Persian languages but often come under pressure from the authorities when conducting such instruction in Persian. In particular evangelical Christian and Jewish communities suffer harassment and arrest by authorities for the printing of materials or delivery of sermons in Persian.

Recognized religious minorities are allowed by the Government to establish community centers and certain cultural, social, sports, or charitable associations that they finance themselves. This does not apply to the Baha'i community, which since 1983 has been denied the right to assemble officially or to maintain administrative institutions. Because the Baha'i Faith has no clergy, the denial of the right to form such institutions and elect officers has threatened its existence.

Religious minorities suffer discrimination in the legal system, receiving lower awards than Muslims in injury and death lawsuits, and incurring heavier punishments. Muslim men are free to marry non-Muslim women but marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men are not recognized.

The Government is highly suspicious of any proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims and can be harsh in its response, in particular against Baha'is and evangelical Christians.

The Government does not ensure the right of citizens to change or renounce their religious faith. Apostasy, specifically conversion from Islam, can be punishable by death.

The Baha'i Faith originated in Iran during the 1840's as a reformist movement within Shi'a Islam. Initially it attracted a wide following among Shi'a clergy. The political and religious authorities of that time joined to suppress the movement, and since then the hostility of the Shi'a clergy to the Baha'i Faith has remained intense. Baha'is are considered apostates because of their claim to a valid religious revelation subsequent to that of Mohammed. The Baha'i Faith is defined by the Government as a political "sect," historically linked to the Pahlavi regime and, hence, counterrevolutionary and characterized by its espionage activities for the benefit of foreign entities, particularly Israel. Historically at risk in the country, Baha'is often have suffered increased levels of harassment and abuse during times of political unrest.

Baha'is may not teach or practice their faith or maintain links with coreligionists abroad. The fact that the Baha'i world headquarters (established by the founder of the Baha'i Faith in the 19th century in what was then Ottoman-controlled Palestine) is situated in what is now the state of Israel, exposes Baha'is to government charges of "espionage on behalf of Zionism," in particular when caught communicating with or sending monetary contributions to the Baha'i Faith headquarters.

Broad restrictions on Baha'is appear to be aimed at destroying them as a community. Baha'is repeatedly have been offered relief from mistreatment if they were prepared to recant their faith.

Baha'i cemeteries, holy places, historical sites, administrative centers, and other assets were seized shortly after the 1979 revolution. None of the properties have been returned, and many have been destroyed. Baha'is are not allowed to bury and

honor their dead in keeping with their religious tradition. They are permitted access only to areas of wasteland that the Government designates for their use, and are not allowed to mark the graves. Many historic Baha'i gravesites have been desecrated or destroyed. In October 1998, three Baha'is were arrested in Damavand, a city north of Tehran, on the grounds that they had buried their dead without government authorization.

Baha'i group meetings and religious education, which often take place in private homes and offices, are curtailed severely. Public and private universities continue to deny admittance to Baha'i students, a particularly demoralizing blow to a community that traditionally has placed a high value on education. Denial of access to higher education appears aimed at the eventual impoverishment of the Baha'i community.

Baha'is regularly are denied compensation for injury or criminal victimization. Government authorities claim that only Muslim plaintiffs are eligible for compensation in these circumstances.

A 1993 law prohibits government workers from membership in groups that deny the "divine religions," terminology that the Government uses to label members of the Baha'i Faith. The law also stipulates penalties for government workers who do not observe "Islamic principles and rules."

In 1993 the U.N. Special Representative reported the existence of a government policy directive on the Baha'is. According to the directive, the Supreme Revolutionary Council instructed government agencies to block the progress and development of the Baha'i community, expel Baha'i students from universities, cut the Baha'is' links with groups outside the country, restrict the employment of Baha'is, and deny Baha'is "positions of influence," including those in education. The Government claims that the directive is a forgery. However, it appears to be an accurate reflection of current government practice.

While in recent years the Government has eased some restrictions, thereby enabling Baha'is to obtain food-ration booklets and send their children to public schools, the prohibition against the admission of Baha'is to universities remains. Thousands of Baha'is dismissed from government jobs in the early 1980's receive no unemployment benefits and have been required to repay the Government for salaries or pensions received from the first day of employment. Those unable to do so face prison sentences.

Over the past 2 years, the Government took some positive steps in recognizing the rights of Baha'is, as well as other religious minorities. In November 1999, President Khatami publicly stated that no one in Iran should be persecuted because of his or her religious beliefs. He added that he would defend the civil rights of all citizens, regardless of their beliefs or religion. Subsequently the Expediency Council approved the "Right of Citizenship" bill, affirming the social and political rights of all citizens and their equality before the law. In February 2000, following approval of the bill, the head of the judiciary issued a circular letter to all registry offices throughout the country, which permits any couple to be registered as husband and wife without being required to state their religious affiliation. This measure effectively permits the registration of Baha'i marriages in the country. Previously Baha'i marriages were not recognized by the Government, leaving Baha'i women open to charges of prostitution. Consequently children of Baha'i marriages were not recognized as legitimate and, therefore, were denied inheritance rights.

While Jews are a recognized religious minority, allegations of official discrimination are frequent. The Government's anti-Israel policies, along with a perception among radical Muslim elements that Jewish citizens support Zionism and the State of Israel, create a threatening atmosphere for the small Jewish community. Jewish leaders reportedly are reluctant to draw attention to official mistreatment of their community due to fear of government reprisal.

There appears to be little restriction or interference with the religious practice or education of Jews. Jews are permitted to obtain passports and to travel outside the country; however, with the exception of certain business travelers, are required by the authorities to obtain clearance (and pay additional fees) before each trip abroad. The Government appears concerned about the emigration of Jews and permission generally is not granted for all members of a Jewish family to travel outside the country at the same time. Jews were eased out of government positions after 1979.

According to the U.N. High Commissioner of Refugees Background Paper on Iran, the Mandaean community is included among the country's recognized religious minorities. The small community faces discrimination similar to the country's other pre-Islamic religious minorities.

Although Sunni Muslims are accorded full respect under the terms of the Constitution, some groups claim discrimination on the part of the Government. In par-

ticular Sunnis cite the lack of a Sunni mosque in Tehran and claim that authorities refuse to authorize construction of a Sunni place of worship in the capital.

Shortly after the 1979 revolution, the Government repealed the Family Protection Law, a hallmark bill that was adopted in 1967, which gave women increased rights in the home and workplace, and replaced it with a legal system based largely on Shari'a practices. The State enforces gender segregation in most public spaces, and prohibits women from interacting openly with unmarried men or men not related to them. Women must ride in a reserved section on public buses and enter public buildings, universities, and airports through separate entrances. Women are prohibited from attending male sporting events, although this restriction does not appear to be enforced universally. While the enforcement of a conservative Islamic dress codes has varied with the political climate since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, what women wear in public is not entirely a matter of personal choice. Women are subject to harassment by the authorities if their dress or behavior is considered inappropriate and may be sentenced to flogging or imprisonment for such violations. The law prohibits the publication of pictures of uncovered women in the print media, including pictures of foreign women. There are penalties for failure to observe Islamic dress codes at work.

In 1998 the Majles passed legislation that mandated segregation of the sexes in the provision of medical care. The bill provided for women to be treated only by female physicians and men by male physicians, which raised questions about the quality of care that women could receive under such a regime, considering the current imbalance between the number of trained and licensed male and female physicians and specialists.

Muslim women may not marry non-Muslim men. The testimony of a woman is worth only half that of a man in court. A married woman must obtain the written consent of her husband before traveling outside the country.

In October 2000, the Parliament passed a bill to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 9 to 15. However, in November 2000, the Council of Guardians rejected the bill as contrary to Islamic law, although even under the current law marriage at the minimum age is rare. All women, no matter the age, must have the permission of their father or a living male relative in order to marry. The law allows for the practice of *Siqeh*, or temporary marriage, a Shi'a custom in which a woman or a girl may become the wife of a married or single Muslim male after a simple and brief religious ceremony. The *Siqeh* marriage may last for a night or as little as 30 minutes. The bond is not recorded on identification documents, and, according to Islamic law, men may have as many *Siqeh* wives as they wish. Such wives are not granted rights associated with traditional marriage.

Under legislation passed in 1983, women have the right to divorce, and regulations promulgated in 1984 substantially broadened the grounds on which a woman may seek a divorce. However, a husband is not required to cite a reason for divorcing his wife. In 1986 the Government issued a 12-point "contract" to serve as a model for marriage and divorce, which limits the privileges accorded to men by custom and traditional interpretations of Islamic law. The model contract also recognized a divorced woman's right to a share in the property that couples acquire during their marriage and to increased alimony rights. Women who remarry are forced to give up custody of children from earlier marriages to the child's father. In 1998 the Majles passed a law that granted custody of minor children to the mother in certain divorce cases in which the father is proven unfit to care for the child (the measure was enacted because of the complaints of mothers who had lost custody of their children to former husbands with drug addictions and criminal records).

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government appears to adhere to a practice of keeping a small number of Baha'is in arbitrary detention, some at risk of execution, at any given time. There were 10 Baha'is reported to be under arrest for the practice of their faith at the end of the period covered by this report, 2 of them under sentences of death.

Ruhollah Rowhani, a Baha'i, was executed in July 1998 after having served 9 months in solitary confinement on a charge of apostasy stemming from allegedly having converted a Muslim woman to the Baha'i Faith. The woman claimed that her mother was a Baha'i and that she herself had been raised a Baha'i. Rowhani was not accorded a public trial or sentencing for his alleged crime, and no sentence was announced prior to his execution.

Two Baha'is, Sirus Zabihi-Moghaddam and Hadayat Kashefi-Najafabadi, were tried alongside Rowhani in 1998 and later sentenced to death by a revolutionary court in Mashad for practicing their faith. In 2000 the sentences were reduced to 7 and 5 years respectively.

The Government continued to imprison and detain Baha'is based on their religious beliefs. Manuchehr Khulusi was arrested in June 1999 while visiting fellow Baha'is in the town of Birjand, and was imprisoned until his release in May 2000. During his imprisonment, Khulusi was interrogated, beaten, held in solitary confinement, and denied access to his lawyer. The charges brought against him are still unknown, but they were believed to be related to his faith. The Islamic Revolutionary Court in Mashhad held a 2-day trial in September 1999 and sentenced Khulusi to death in February 2000. Despite Khulusi's release, it is unclear if the conviction and death sentence against him still stand.

The property rights of Baha'is generally are disregarded. Since 1979 large numbers of private and business properties belonging to Baha'is have been confiscated. In 2000 eight buildings belonging to Baha'is were confiscated in Tehran, Shiraz, and Isfahan. In 1999 three Baha'i homes in Yazd and one in Arbakan were confiscated because their owners were members of the Baha'i community. In September and October 1998, government officers plundered more than 500 Baha'i homes throughout the country and seized personal household effects, such as furniture and appliances. The Government's seizure of Baha'i personal property, as well as its denial of Baha'i access to education and employment, is eroding the economic base of the Baha'i community.

In 1999 authorities in Khurasan intensified their efforts to intimidate and undermine Baha'i education. Two teachers in Mashhad were arrested and sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment. Their students were given suspended sentences, to be carried out if the young persons again participated in religious education classes. Three more Baha'is were arrested in Bujnurd in northern Khurasan for participating in religious education gatherings. After 6 days in prison, they were released with suspended sentences of 5 years. The use of suspended sentences appears to be a new tactic by the Government to discourage Baha'is from taking part in monthly religious gatherings.

In September 1998, authorities began a nationwide operation to disrupt the activities of the Baha'i Institute of Higher Learning. Also known as the "Open University," the Institute was established by the Baha'i community shortly after the revolution to offer higher educational opportunities to Baha'i students who had been denied access to the country's high schools and universities. The Institute employed Baha'i faculty and professors, many of whom had been dismissed from teaching positions by the Government as a result of their faith, and conducted classes in homes or offices owned or rented by Baha'is. During the operation, which took place in at least 14 different cities, 36 faculty members were arrested and a variety of personal property, including books, papers, and furniture, either were destroyed or confiscated. Government interrogators sought to force the detained faculty members to sign statements acknowledging that the Open University was now defunct and pledging not to associate with it in the future. Baha'is outside the country report that none of the 36 detainees would sign the document. All but 4 of the 36 persons detained during the September 1998 raid on the Baha'i Institute had been released by November 1998.

In March 1999, Dr. Sina Hakimian, Farzad Khajeh Sharifabadi, Habibullah Ferdosian Najafabadi, and Ziaullah Mirzapanah, the four remaining detainees from the September 1998 raid, were convicted under Article 498 of the Penal Code and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 3 to 10 years. In the court verdict, the four were accused of having established a "secret organization" engaged in "attracting youth, teaching against Islam, and teaching against the regime of the Islamic Republic." According to Baha'i groups outside the country, the four taught general science and Persian literature courses. In July 1999, Mirzapanah, who had been sentenced to 3 years in prison, became ill and was hospitalized. Prison authorities allowed him to return home upon his recovery on the understanding that they could find him whenever necessary. The other three were released in December 1999.

The authorities have become particularly vigilant in recent years in curbing what is perceived as increasing proselytizing activities by evangelical Christians whose services are conducted in Persian. Government officials have reacted to such activity by closing evangelical churches and arresting converts. Members of evangelical congregations have been required to carry membership cards, photocopies of which must be provided to the authorities. Worshipers are subject to identity checks by authorities posted outside congregation centers. Meetings for evangelical services have been restricted by the authorities to Sundays, and church officials have been ordered to inform the Ministry of Information and Islamic Guidance before admitting new members to their congregations.

Because conversion of a Muslim to a non-Muslim religion may be considered apostasy under traditional Shari'a practices enforced in the country, non-Muslims may not proselytize Muslims without putting their own lives at risk. Evangelical church

leaders are subject to pressure from authorities to sign pledges that they would not evangelize Muslims or allow Muslims to attend church services.

One U.S.-based organization reported in 1997 8 deaths of evangelical Christians at the hands of authorities in the previous 11 years, and between 15 and 23 disappearances in the year between November 1997 and November 1998.

Mistreatment of evangelical Christians continued during the period covered by this report. Christian groups have reported instances of government harassment of churchgoers in Tehran, in particular against worshipers at the Assembly of God congregation in the capital. Instances of harassment cited included conspicuous monitoring outside Christian premises by Revolutionary Guards to discourage Muslims or converts from entering church premises and demands for presentation of identity papers of worshipers inside. Iranian Christians International (ICI) detailed the cases of Alireza and Mahboobeh Mahmoudian, converts to Christianity and lay leaders of the Saint Simon the Zealot Osgofi Church in Shiraz, who were forced to leave the country permanently in June 1998 after continued harassment by authorities. ICI reported that Alireza Mahmoudian had lost his job because of his conversion and had been beaten repeatedly by Basijis (paramilitary forces) and Ansar-e Hizbollah (gangs of thugs often aligned with specific members of the leadership) on orders of government officials from the Ministry of Islamic Guidance. His wife, Mahboobeh, also had been the subject of intimidation, principally through frequent and aggressive interrogation by government officials.

Some Jewish groups outside the country cite an increase in anti-Semitic propaganda in the official and semiofficial media as adding to the pressure felt by the Jewish community. One example cited is the periodic publication of the anti-Semitic and fictitious "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," both by the Government and by periodicals associated with hard-line elements of the regime. In 1986 the Iranian Embassy in London was reported to have published and distributed the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in English. The Protocols also were published in serial form in the country in 1994 and again in January 1999. On the latter occasion they were published in Sobh, a conservative monthly publication reportedly aligned with the security services.

In February and March 1999, 13 Jews were arrested in the cities of Shiraz and Isfahan. Among the group were several prominent rabbis, teachers of Hebrew, and their students. The charges centered on alleged acts of espionage on behalf of Israel, an offense punishable by death. The 13 were detained for over 1 year before trial, largely in solitary confinement, without official charges or access to lawyers. In April 2000, the defendants were appointed lawyers, and a closed trial commenced in a revolutionary court in Shiraz. Human rights groups and governments around the world criticized the lack of due process in the proceedings. The Special Representative on Iran characterized them as "in no way fair." On July 1, 2000, 10 of the 13, along with 2 Muslim defendants, were convicted on charges of illegal contact with Israel, conspiracy to form an illegal organization, and recruiting agents. They received prison sentences ranging from 4 to 13 years. Three were acquitted. The lawyers of those convicted filed an appeal and on September 21, 2000, an appeals court overturned the convictions for forming an illegal organization and recruiting agents, but upheld the convictions for illegal contacts with Israel. Their sentences were reduced to between 2 and 9 years' imprisonment. One of the 10 convicted was released in February 2001 upon completion of his prison term.

Jewish groups outside the country noted that the March 1999 arrest of the 13 Jewish individuals coincided with an increase in anti-Semitic propaganda in newspapers and journals associated with hardline elements of the Government. Since the beginning of the trial, Jewish businesses in Tehran and Shiraz have been targets of vandalism and boycotts, and Jews reportedly suffered personal harassment and intimidation.

Human Rights Watch reported the death in May 1998 of Jewish businessman Ruhollah Kakhodah-Zadeh, who was hanged in prison without a public charge or legal proceeding. Reports indicate that Kakhodah-Zadeh may have been killed for assisting Jews to emigrate. As an accountant, Kakhoda-Zadeh provided power-of-attorney services for Jews departing the country.

Human Rights Watch reported in 1998 the killing of Sunni prayer leader Molavi Imam Bakhsh Narouie in the province of Sistan va-Baluchistan in the southeast. This led to protests from the local community, which believed that government authorities were involved in the murder.

There were no reports of government harassment of the Zoroastrian community during the period covered by this report.

The Government restricts the movement of several senior religious leaders, some of whom have been under house arrest for years, and often charges members of reli-

religious minorities with crimes such as drug offenses, “confronting the regime,” and apostasy.

The Special Clerical Court (SCC) system, which was established in 1987 to investigate offenses and crimes committed by clerics, and which is overseen directly by the Supreme Leader, is not provided for in the Constitution, and operates outside the domain of the judiciary. In particular critics alleged that the clerical courts were used to prosecute certain clerics for expressing controversial ideas and for participating in activities outside the area of religion, including journalism.

During the latter part of 2000, a Special Clerical Court began the trial of Hojatolislam Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, a cleric who participated in the Berlin conference, on charges of apostasy, “corruption on earth,” “declaring war on God,” and “denial of basic religious principles,” which potentially carry the death penalty. Eshkevari has called for more liberal interpretations of Islamic law in certain areas. In November 1999, former Interior Minister and Vice President Abdollah Nouri was sentenced by a branch of the SCC to a 5-year prison term for allegedly publishing “anti-Islamic” articles, insulting government officials, promoting friendly relations with the United States, and providing illegal publicity to dissident cleric Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri in the pages of *Khordad*, a newspaper that was established by Nouri in late 1998 and closed at the time of his arrest. Nouri used the public trial to attack the legitimacy of the SCC.

In April 1999, a branch of the SCC convicted Hojatolislam Mohsen Kadivar, a Shi’a cleric and popular seminary lecturer, to 18 months in prison for “dissemination of lies and confusing public opinion” in a series of broadcast interviews and newspaper articles. Kadivar advocated political reform and greater intellectual freedom and criticized the misuse of religion to maintain power. In an interview published in a newspaper, Kadivar criticized certain government officials for turning criticism against them into alleged crimes against the State. He also observed that such leaders “mistake themselves with Islam, with national interests, or with the interests of the system, and in this way believe that they should be immune from criticism.” He also allegedly criticized former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini and demonstrated support for dissident cleric Ayatollah Montazeri. Kadivar’s trial was not open to the public.

In July 1999, the SCC banned the daily newspaper *Salaam* and indicted its publisher, Mohammad Mousavi Khoeniha, on charges of “violating Islamic principles,” “endangering national security,” and “disturbing public opinion.” Khoeniha, a cleric, later was sentenced to a 5-year jail term. The charges involved the publication by *Salaam* of documents related to the unsolved murders of dissident intellectuals in late 1998, which indicated a possible connection to senior officials in the plotting of the murders.

In January 2001, judicial authorities closed *Kiyan*, a 10-year-old independent journal specializing in religious and philosophical issues. The Tehran General Court ordered the closure. The Judge stated that *Kiyan* had “published lies, disturbed public opinion and insulted sacred religion.”

Forced Religious Conversions

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. However, a child born to a Muslim father automatically is considered a Muslim.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The continuous activity of Iran’s pre-Islamic, non-Muslim communities, such as Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, has accustomed the population to the presence of non-Muslims in society. However, government actions create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities.

The Jewish community has been reduced to less than one-half of its prerevolutionary size. Some of this emigration is connected with the larger, general waves of departures following the establishment of the Islamic Republic, but some also stems from continued perceived anti-Semitism on the part of the Government and within society.

The Government’s anti-Israel policies and the trial of the 13 Jews in 2000, along with the perception among some of the country’s radicalized elements that Iranian Jews support Zionism and the State of Israel, create a threatening atmosphere for the Jewish community (see Section II). Many Jews have sought to limit their contact with or support for the State of Israel out of fear of reprisal.

Sunni Muslims encounter religious discrimination at the local level, and there were reports of discrimination against practitioners of the Sufi tradition during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iran and thus cannot raise directly with the Government the restrictions the Government places on religious freedom and other abuses that it commits against adherents of minority religions. The U.S. Government makes its position clear in public statements, support for relevant United Nations and NGO efforts, and diplomatic contacts with other countries.

President Clinton made a number of statements regarding the treatment of religious minorities in Iran, including a June 1998 statement criticizing the execution of Ruhollah Rowhani, a member of the Baha'i Faith, and statements in June 1999 and July 2000 calling on the Government to exonerate the imprisoned members of Iran's Jewish community. Secretary of State Albright also called on Iran to release and drop charges against the 13 Jews, 10 of whom were convicted and remained in prison at the end of the period covered by this report.

Since 1982 the U.S. Government has cosponsored a resolution each year regarding the human rights situation in Iran offered by the European Union at the annual meeting of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. The United States has supported a similar resolution offered each year during the U.N. General Assembly. The U.S. Government has supported strongly the work of the U.N. Special Representative on Human Rights for Iran and called on the Iranian Government to grant him admission and allow him to conduct his research (he has been denied entry visas since 1996).

The U.S. State Department spokesman on numerous occasions has addressed the situation of the Baha'i and Jewish communities, notably following Secretary Albright's March 17, 2000 speech on Iran, the execution of Ruhollah Rowhani in June 1998, the Government's actions against the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education in September 1998, and repeatedly after the arrest of 13 members of the Iranian Jewish community in March 1999. The U.S. Government has encouraged other governments to make similar statements and has pressed those governments to raise the issue of religious freedom in discussions with the Iranian Government.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Iran as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Secretary of State redesignated Iran in October 2000.

IRAQ

The Interim Constitution provides for individual freedom of religion, provided that it does not violate "morality and public order;" however, the Government severely limits freedom of religion in practice, represses the Shi'a religious leadership, and seeks to exploit religious differences for political purposes. Islam is the official state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Although Shi'a Arabs are the largest religious group, Sunni Arabs traditionally have dominated economic and political life. Sunni Arabs are at a distinct advantage in all areas of secular life. The Government also severely restricts or bans outright many Shi'a religious practices. The Government for decades has conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, arbitrary arrest, and protracted detention against the religious leaders and followers of the majority Shi'a Muslim population and has sought to undermine the identity of minority Christian (Assyrian and Chaldean) and Yazidi groups. The regime systematically has killed senior Shi'a clerics, desecrated Shi'a mosques and holy sites, interfered with Shi'a religious education, and prevented Shi'a adherents from performing their religious rites.

Shi'a Arabs, the religious majority of the population, have long been disadvantaged economically, politically, and socially. Christians in the country report being victimized by intra-Kurdish fighting.

The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iraq and thus is unable to raise directly with the Government the problems of severe restrictions on religious freedom and other human rights abuses. However, the U.S. Government makes its position clear in public statements and in diplomatic contacts with other states.

In 1999 and 2000, the Secretary of State designated Iraq a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

While a precise statistical breakdown is impossible to ascertain because of likely inaccuracies in the latest census (conducted in 1997), according to best estimates, 97 percent of the population of 22 million persons are Muslim. Shi'a Muslims—predominantly Arab, but also including Turkoman, Faily Kurds, and other groups—constitute a 60 to 65 percent majority. Sunni Muslims make up 32 to 37 percent of the population (approximately 18 to 20 percent are Sunni Kurds, 12 to 15 percent Sunni Arabs, and the remainder are Sunni Turkomen). The remaining approximately 3 percent of the overall population consist of Christians (Assyrians, Chaldeans, Roman Catholics, and Armenians), Yazidis, Mandaeans, and a small number of Jews.

The Shi'a, though predominantly located in the south, also are present in large numbers in Baghdad and have communities in most parts of the country. Sunnis form the majority in the center of the country and in the north.

Shi'a and Sunni Arabs are not ethnically distinct. Shi'a Arabs have supported an independent Iraq alongside their Sunni brethren since the 1920 Revolt; many Shi'a joined the Ba'ath Party and the Shi'a formed the backbone of the Iraqi Army in the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq War.

Assyrians and Chaldeans are considered by many to be distinct ethnic groups as well as the descendants of some of the earliest Christian communities. These communities speak a distinct language (Syriac). Although these groups do not define themselves as Arabs, the Government defines Assyrians and Chaldeans as such, evidently to encourage them to identify with the Sunni-Arab dominated regime. Christians are concentrated in the north and in Baghdad.

The Yazidis are a syncretistic religious group (or a set of several groups). Many Yazidis consider themselves to be ethnically Kurdish, though some would define themselves as both religiously and ethnically distinct from Muslim Kurds. However, the Government, without any historical basis, has defined the Yazidis as Arabs. Yazidis predominately reside in the north of the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Interim Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely restricts this right in practice. Islam is the official state religion. The Constitution does not provide for the recognition of Assyrians, Chaldeans, or Yazidis.

The Government's registration requirements for religious organizations are unknown. New political parties must be based in Baghdad and are prohibited from having any ethnic or religious character. The Government does not recognize political organizations that have been formed by Shi'a Muslims or Assyrian Christians. These groups continued to attract support despite their illegal status. There are religious qualifications for government office; candidates for the National Assembly, for example, "must believe in God."

There are no Shari'a (Islamic law) courts as such. Civil courts are empowered to administer Islamic law in cases involving personal status, such as divorce and inheritance.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although Shi'a Arabs are the largest religious group, Sunni Arabs traditionally have dominated economic and political life. Sunni Arabs are at a distinct advantage in all areas of secular life, be it civil, political, military, or economic.

The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs monitors places of worship, appoints the clergy, approves the building and repair of all places of worship, and approves the publication of all religious literature.

The following government restrictions on religious rights remained in effect throughout the period covered by this report: restrictions and outright bans on communal Friday prayer by Shi'a; restrictions on Shi'a mosque libraries loaning books; a ban on the broadcast of Shi'a programs on government-controlled radio or television; a ban on the publication of Shi'a books, including prayer books and guides; a ban on many funeral processions other than those organized by the Government; a ban on other Shi'a funeral observances such as gatherings for Koran reading; and the prohibition of certain processions and public meetings commemorating Shi'a holy days.

Shi'a groups report capturing documents from the security services during the 1991 uprising that listed thousands of forbidden Shi'a religious writings. Since 1991 security forces have been encamped in the shrine to Imam Ali in Najaf, one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites, and at the city's Shi'a theological schools. The shrine was closed for "repairs" for approximately 2 years after the 1991 uprising. The adjoining al-Khathra mosque, which also was closed in 1994, has remained closed since. The closure coincided with the death of Ayatollah Sayed Mohammed Taqi al-Khoei who was killed in what observers believe was a staged car accident; before his death, Ayatollah al-Khoei led prayers in the al-Khathra mosque.

During the period covered by this report, the U.N. Special Rapporteur reported that, according to Shi'a religious dignitaries in Iran, the Government continues to arrest Shi'a religious figures, disrupt Shi'a religious ceremonies—sometimes with armed force—and places restrictions on practices by most Shi'a religious leaders. As a consequence, the number of religious scholars, students, and other dignitaries in the seminaries reportedly has declined.

In June 1999, several Shi'a opposition groups reported that the Government had instituted a program in the predominantly Shi'a districts of Baghdad that uses food ration cards to restrict where individuals may pray. The ration cards, part of the U.N. oil-for-food program, reportedly are checked when the bearer enters a mosque and are printed with a notice of severe penalties for those who attempt to pray at an unauthorized location. Shi'a expatriates who reported this policy believe that it is aimed not only at preventing unauthorized religious gatherings of Shi'a, but at stopping Shi'a adherents from attending Friday prayers in Sunni mosques, a practice that many pious Shi'a have turned to because their own mosques remain closed.

The Government consistently politicizes and interferes with religious pilgrimages, both of Iraqi Muslims who wish to make the Hajj to Mecca and Medina and of Iraqi and non-Iraqi Muslim pilgrims who travel to holy sites within the country. For example, in 1998 the U.N. Sanctions Committee offered to disburse vouchers for travel and expenses to pilgrims making the Hajj; however, the Government rejected this offer. In 1999 the Sanctions Committee offered to disburse funds to cover Hajj-related expenses via a neutral third party; the Government again rejected the offer. Following the December 1999 passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1284, the Sanctions Committee again sought to devise a protocol to facilitate the payment for individuals making the journey. The Sanctions Committee proposed to issue \$250 in cash and \$1,750 in travelers checks to each individual pilgrim to be distributed at the U.N. office in Baghdad in the presence of both U.N. and Iraqi officials. The Government again declined and, consequently, no Iraqi pilgrims were able to take advantage of the available funds or, in 2000, of the permitted flights.

Twice each year—on the 10th day of the Muslim month of Muharram and 40 days later in the month of Safar—Shi'a pilgrims from throughout the country and around the world seek to commemorate the death of the Imam Hussein in the city of Karbala. In past years, the Government has denied visas to many foreign pilgrims for the Ashura. For example, in 1999 the Government reportedly charged foreign Shi'a pilgrims \$900 for bus passage and food from Damascus to Karbala, a trip that normally would cost about \$150.

The Government does not permit education in languages other than Arabic and Kurdish. Public instruction in Syriac, which was announced under a 1972 decree, never was implemented. Thus, in areas under government control, Assyrian and Chaldean children are not permitted to attend classes in Syriac.

In northern areas under Iraqi Kurdish control, classes in Syriac have been permitted since the 1991 uprising against the Government. By October 1998, the first groups of students were ready to begin secondary school in Syriac in the north, but some Assyrian sources reported that regional Iraqi Kurdish authorities refused to allow the classes to begin. Details of this practice (for example, the number of students prepared to start secondary courses in Syriac and the towns where they were located) were not available, and Kurdish regional authorities denied engaging in this practice. There were no reports of elementary school instruction in Syriac being hindered in the north of the country.

Assyrian religious organizations have claimed that the Government applies apostasy laws in a discriminatory fashion. Assyrians are permitted to convert to Islam, whereas Muslims are forbidden to convert to Christianity.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government for decades has conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, and protracted arbitrary arrest against the religious leaders and followers of the majority Shi'a Muslim population and has sought to undermine the identity of minority Christian (Assyrian and Chaldean) and Yazidi groups.

Despite supposed legal protection of religious equality, the regime has repressed severely the Shi'a clergy and those who follow the Shi'a faith. Forces from the Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat), General Security (Amn al-Amm), the Military Bureau, Saddam's Commandos (Fedayeen Saddam), and the Ba'ath Party have killed senior Shi'a clerics, desecrated Shi'a mosques and holy sites (particularly in the aftermath of the 1991 civil uprising), arrested tens of thousands of Shi'a, interfered with Shi'a religious education, prevented Shi'a adherents from performing their religious rites, and fired upon or arrested Shi'a who sought to take part in their religious processions. Security agents reportedly are stationed at all the major Shi'a mosques and shrines and search, harass, and arbitrarily arrest worshippers.

Shi'a groups reported numerous instances of religious scholars—particularly in the internationally renowned Shi'a academic center of Najaf—being subjected to arrest, assault, and harassment during the period covered by this report. This follows years of government manipulation of the Najaf theological schools. As reported by Amnesty International in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the Government systematically deported tens of thousands of Shi'a (both Arabs and Kurds) to Iran, claiming falsely that they were of Persian descent. According to Shi'a sources, religious scholars and Shi'a merchants who supported the schools financially were prime targets for deportation. In the 1980's, during the Iran-Iraq war, it was reported widely that the Government expelled and denied visas to thousands of foreign scholars who wished to study at Najaf. After the 1991 popular uprising, the Government relaxed some restrictions on Shi'a attending the schools; however, this easing of restrictions was followed by an increased government repression of the Shi'a religious establishment, including the requirement that speeches by imams in mosques be based upon government-provided material that attacked fundamentalist trends.

Since the 1980's, the Government reportedly has attempted to eliminate the senior Shi'a religious leadership (the Mirjaiyat) through killings, disappearances, and summary executions.

Since January 1998, the killings of three internationally respected clerics and an attempt on the life of a fourth have been attributed widely to government agents by international human rights activists, other governments, and Shi'a clergy in Iran and Lebanon. Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Murtada al-Borojourni, age 69, was killed in April 1998. Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Mirza Ali al-Gharawi, age 68, was killed in July 1998. Ayatollah Sheikh Bashir al Hussaini escaped an attempt on his life in January 1999. Grand Ayatollah Mohammad al-Sadr, age 66, was killed in February 1999. Former U.N. Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur for Iraq, Max Van Der Stoel, sent a letter in 1999 to the Government expressing his concern that the killings might be part of an organized attack by the Government against the independent leadership of the Shi'a community. The Government has not responded to Van Der Stoel's inquiries.

In the aftermath of these killings, the Government increased repressive activities in the south and in other predominantly Shi'a areas to prevent mourning observances and popular demonstrations. As part of this campaign, two Shi'a scholars in Baghdad, Sheikh Hussain Suwai'dawi, and Sheikh Ali al-Frajawi, reportedly were executed in July 1998.

In April 1999, the Government executed four Shi'a men for the al-Sadr slaying after a closed trial. Shi'a religious authorities and opposition groups objected to the trial process and contend that the four executed men were innocent. At least one of the four, Sheikh Abdul Hassan Abbas Kufi, a prayer leader in Najaf, reportedly was in prison at the time of the killing. The Shi'a press reported in January 1999 that he had been arrested on December 24, 1998. The three others executed with Kufi were Islamic scholar Ahmad Mustapha Hassan Ardabili, Ali Kathim Mahjan, and Haider Ali Hussain. The status of Ali al-Musawi, another Shi'a cleric accused of complicity in al-Sadr's death, still is unknown. According to a report submitted to the Special Rapporteur in September 1999, another of al-Sadr's sons, Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr, was arrested along with a large number of theological students who had studied under the Ayatollah. Nineteen followers of al-Sadr reportedly were executed toward the end of 1999, including Sheikh Muhammad al-Numani, Friday imam Sheikh Abd-al-Razzaq al-Rabi'i, assistant Friday imam Kazim al-Safi, and students from a religious seminary in Najaf.

Although a funeral for al-Sadr was prohibited, spontaneous gatherings of mourners took place in the days after his death. Government security forces used excessive force in breaking up these illegal religious gatherings. Throughout the country, security forces used automatic weapons and armored vehicles to break up demonstrations, killing, injuring, and arresting hundreds of protesters.

Authorities have targeted suspected supporters of al-Sadr since he was killed in 1999. In February 2000, 30 Najaf religious school students, who were arrested after al-Sadr's death, reportedly were executed. In March 2000, scores of Shi'a who fled

the country in 1999 and early 2000 told Human Rights Watch that they had been interrogated repeatedly and, in some cases, detained and tortured. Some were relatives of al-Sadr's students who had been arrested after the killing, and others were relatives of other prominent clerics. In May 2000, according to Human Rights Watch, at least six religious students in Najaf who were arrested after al-Sadr's killing were sentenced to death, including Shaikh Salim Jassem al-Abbudi, Shaikh Nasser al-Saa'idi and Sa'ad al-Nuri. Two clerics, Abdulsattar Abed-Ibrahim al-Mausawi and Ahmad al-Hashemi, reportedly were executed in May 2000 after 6 months' detention. The Government accused them of attempting to discredit the President after they blamed Saddam Hussein for the al-Sadr's killing. In late 1999 and early 2000, approximately 4,000 Shi'a families were expelled from Baghdad and sent to southern and western Iraq in reprisal for the disturbances that took place after al-Sadr's death.

Authorities took forceful preemptive measures well ahead of the first anniversary of al-Sadr's killing. Military units were deployed around shrines, mosques, and other religious institutions 2 months before the February anniversary. The Government closed mosques except during prayer time, and the turnout on the holy day of Ashura in April 2001 consequently was many times lower than it had been in the past. In late May 2001, the Ba'ath party reportedly issued orders prohibiting the ritual walking pilgrimage from Najaf to Karbala, a procession marking the end of the 40-day mourning period for Imam Husayn. Travelers reported that security troops opened fire on pilgrims who attempted the pilgrimage.

In the aftermath of the al-Sadr killing and subsequent repression, the Shi'a religious community remains in a precarious state. Of the three generally acknowledged senior Shi'a clerics, Ayatollah Ali as-Sistani is forbidden to lead prayers and remains under virtual house arrest in Najaf as a result of attempts on his life; Ayatollah Mohammed Sayeed al-Hakim is forbidden to lead prayers at the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf (or in the adjoining al-Khathra mosque, which has remained closed since 1994); and the status of Ayatollah Hussein Bahr al-Aloom, who was arrested in 1991, reportedly died under questionable circumstances in June 2001. Many scholars at the Shi'a religious schools in Najaf reportedly have been arrested, as have many of al-Sadr's religious appointees throughout the country. These restrictions and abuses had an adverse affect on the development of a new set of Shi'a leaders.

The al-Sadr killing intensified Shi'a anger at the ruling Sunni minority and led to more severe government repression of the Shi'a. The Shi'a resistance also launched bolder actions against the regime—including grenade and rocket attacks on security headquarters, Ba'ath Party offices, and presidential residences in Baghdad, as well as small arms attacks in many parts of the capital. For example, the al-Amin, Nuwab ad-Dubbat, and al-Nafth districts of Baghdad reportedly have remained in a heightened state of alert every Friday since al-Sadr's death.

Reports of military operations against Shi'a civilians also increased notably in the summer of 1998 after the killings of Ayatollahs Ali al-Gharawi and Sheikh al-Borojoudi. In numerous incidents during 1998, security forces injured and summarily executed Shi'a civilians, burned Shi'a homes, confiscated land belonging to Shi'a, and arbitrarily arrested and detained scores of Shi'a.

In January 1999, according to a report from the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), security officials reportedly arrested Sheikh Awas, imam of the Nasiriyah city mosque. Shortly after the arrest of Sheikh Awas, hundreds of Shi'a congregation members reportedly marched on the security directorate to demand that Awas be released immediately to them. Security forces allegedly opened fire on the unarmed crowd with automatic weapons and threw hand grenades. Five persons were killed, 11 were wounded, and 300 were arrested. The security services subsequently banned Friday prayer in Nasiriyah.

The Human Rights Organization in Iraq (HROI) reported that 1,093 Shi'a were arrested in June 1999 in Basrah alone. The Iraqi National Congress reports that tanks from the Hammourabi Republican Guard division attacked the towns of Rumaita and Khudur in June 1999 after residents protested the systematic maldistribution of food and medicine to the detriment of the Shi'a. Fourteen villagers were killed, over 100 persons were arrested, and 40 homes were destroyed. In June 1999, SCIRI reported that 160 homes in the Abul Khaseeb district near Basra were destroyed.

In several incidents in 1999, security forces killed and injured Shi'a congregants who gathered to protest closures of various Shi'a mosques.

The Government for several decades has interfered with Ashura holiday commemorations, including interference with the ritual walking pilgrimage to Karbala to mark the end of the 40-day mourning period.

In May 2000, the Government issued orders prohibiting the walking pilgrimage to Karbala. The Government reportedly deployed more than 15,000 Republican Guard troops armed with light weapons and in civilian clothes on the main roads leading into both cities to enforce the prohibition. Travelers later reported that security troops opened fire on pilgrims who attempted the walk from Najaf to Karbala as part of the 40th day ritual. Shi'a expatriates report that groups as small as 10 to 20 pilgrims attempting to make their way into the city at other times also have been arrested.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iraq reported during the period covered by this report that he interviewed the brother of a Shi'a Arab who allegedly was arrested in 1998 for carrying in his car Islamic books and other religious papers. The individual reportedly was executed 5 months later, along with 70 other persons, on charges of belonging to the Shi'a movement. His family reportedly learned of the execution when government authorities delivered his body to them.

Security forces also have forced Shi'a inhabitants of the southern marshes to relocate to major southern cities and to areas along the Iranian border. Former Special Rapporteur van Der Stoel described this practice in his February 1999 report, adding that many other persons have been transferred to detention centers and prisons in central Iraq, primarily in Baghdad. The Government reportedly also continued to move forcibly Shi'a populations from the south to the north to replace Kurds, Turkomen, and Assyrians, who had been expelled forcibly from major cities.

The military also continued its water-diversion and other projects in the south. The Government's claim that the drainage is part of a land reclamation plan to increase the acreage of arable land and spur agricultural production is given little credence. Hundreds of square miles have been burned in military operations. The former U.N. Special Rapporteur noted the devastating impact that draining the marshes has had on the culture of the Shi'a marsh Arabs. SCIRI claims to have captured government documents that detail the destructive intent of the water diversion program and its connection to "strategic security operations," economic blockade, and "withdrawal of food supply agencies."

The Government's diversion of supplies in the south limited the Shi'a population's access to food, medicine, drinking water, and transportation. According to the former U.N. Special Rapporteur and opposition sources, thousands of persons in Nasiriyah and Basra provinces were denied rations that should have been supplied under the U.N. oil-for-food program. In these provinces and in Amarah province, access to food allegedly is used to reward regime supporters and silence opponents. Shi'a groups report that, due to this policy, the humanitarian condition of Shi'a in the south continued to suffer despite a significant expansion of the oil-for-food program.

While no firm statistics are available regarding the number of religious detainees, observers estimate the total number of security detainees to be in the tens of thousands or more, including numerous religious detainees and prisoners. Some individuals have been held for decades. Others who have remained unaccounted for since their arrests may have died or been executed secretly years ago. The Government reportedly continued to target Shi'a Muslim clergy and their followers for arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. While Shi'a are not the only group targeted in this way (others, including Kurds and secular regime opponents, are targeted for ethnic and political reasons), the Shi'a are the primary group targeted based on their religion. It is likely that Shi'a Muslims constitute the majority of the prison population in the country.

It is difficult to produce an accurate list of persons in prison for their religious beliefs; however, there are some well-known cases of arrest and disappearance on these grounds. For example, in 1991 Iraqi authorities arrested 108 Shi'a clerics and students, including 95-year-old Grand Ayatollah Abu Gharib al-Qassem al-Khoei, 10 of his family members, and 8 of his aides. Ayatollah al-Khoei subsequently was released; however, he was held under house arrest until his death in 1992. The Government also released another person (a foreign national) who was arrested in 1991; however, the fate of the other 106 persons is unknown. In 1992 the Government denied that it knew anything about the whereabouts of the missing persons; however, many observers reportedly witnessed their arrests. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of persons have disappeared, and their whereabouts remain unknown. The majority of those targeted have been Shi'a Muslims and Kurds.

The former Special Rapporteur and others have reported that the Government has engaged in various abuses against the country's 350,000 Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, especially in terms of forced movements from northern areas and repression of political rights.

Most Assyrians live in the northern governorates, and the Government often has suspected them of “collaborating” with Iraqi Kurds. In the north, Kurdish groups often refer to Assyrians as Kurdish Christians. Military forces destroyed numerous Assyrian churches during the 1988 Anfal Campaign and reportedly executed and tortured many Assyrians. Both major Kurdish political parties have indicated that the Government occasionally targets Assyrians as well as ethnic Kurds and Turkomen for expulsion from Kirkuk, where it is seeking to Arabize the city.

There is evidence that the Government in the past compelled Yazidis to join in domestic military action against Muslim Kurds. Captured government documents included in a 1998 Human Rights Watch report describe special all-Yazidi military detachments formed during the 1988–89 Anfal campaign to “pursue and attack” Muslim Kurds. The Government also has targeted the Yazidis in the past. For example, 33 members of the Yazidi community of Mosul, arrested in July 1996, still are unaccounted for.

Although few Jews remain in the country, government officials frequently make anti-Semitic statements. For example, during the period covered by this report, a Ba’th Party official stated that “lowly Jews” were “descendants of monkeys and pigs and worshippers of the infidel tyrant.”

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country’s cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity is not reflected in its political and economic structure. Various segments of the Sunni Arab community, which itself constitutes a minority of the population, effectively have controlled the Government since independence in 1932.

Shi’a Arabs, the religious majority of the population, have long been disadvantaged economically, politically, and socially.

Assyrian groups reported several instances of mob violence by Muslims against Christians in the north in recent years. Assyrians continue to fear attacks by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a Turkish-based terrorist organization operating against indigenous Kurds in the north of the country. Christians in the country report being victimized by intra-Kurdish fighting. Some Assyrian villagers have reported being pressured to leave the countryside for the cities as part of a campaign by indigenous Kurdish forces to deny the PKK access to possible food supplies.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States has no diplomatic relations with Iraq and thus is not able to raise directly with the Government the problems of severe restrictions on religious freedom and other human rights abuses. However, the U.S. Government makes its position clear in public statements and in diplomatic contacts with other states.

During the period covered by this report, the President regularly discussed the problems experienced by Shi’a, Christian, and other religious groups in his periodic reports to Congress on Iraq. The Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, in testimony before Congress on Iraq, highlighted the situation of persons in the south. In a number of speeches delivered during the period covered by this report, the Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues articulated the regime’s crimes against humanity directed at the Shi’a population. The State Department spokesperson issued statements criticizing the deaths of Ayatollahs al-Gharawi, al-Borojourni, al-Sadr, and the attempt on the life of Ayatollah al-Hussaini. The Voice of America broadcast several editorials dealing with the human rights abuses committed against religious groups by the Government.

It is the policy of the United States to encourage a change of regime in Iraq. The United States government is in frequent contact with opposition groups, including religiously oriented Shi’a, Sunni, and Christian groups. All of the groups designated as eligible for assistance under the Iraq Liberation Act have indicated their strong support for religious freedom and tolerance.

In March 2001, for the ninth consecutive year, the United States joined other members of the U.N. Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) to call on the U.N. Secretary General to send human rights monitors to “help in the independent verification of reports on the human rights situation in Iraq.” However, the Government continued to ignore these calls. As in the past, it did not allow the U.N. Special Rapporteur to visit, nor did it respond to his requests for information. Denied entry to the country, the Special Rapporteur has based his reports on the Govern-

ment's human rights abuses on interviews with recent émigrés from the country, interviews with opposition groups with contacts in the country, and other interviews, as well as on published reports.

In 1999 and 2000, then-Secretary of State Albright designated Iraq a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

ISRAEL

(The religious freedom situation in the occupied territories is discussed in the annex appended to this report.)

Israel has no constitution; however, the law provides for freedom of worship, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Basic Law describes Israel as a “Jewish and democratic state.” The overwhelming majority of non-Jewish citizens are Muslims, Druze, and Christians and generally are referred to as Israeli Arabs. Israeli Arabs are subject to various forms of discrimination, some of which have religious dimensions. Israeli Arabs and other non-Jewish Israelis, are, in fact, generally free to practice their religions.

Relations between religious groups—between Jews and non-Jews, between Muslims and Christians, and between the different streams of Judaism—often are strained. Societal tensions between Jews and non-Jews exist primarily as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict; such tensions increased significantly during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Based on its pre-1967 borders, Israel has a total area of approximately 7,685 square miles, and its population is approximately 6.4 million (including Israeli settlers who live in the occupied territories). According to government figures, about 80 percent of the population are Jewish, although an unknown number of these citizens do not qualify as Jews according to the definition espoused by Orthodox Judaism. Additionally, non-Jews (usually Christian) who immigrate to Israel with their Jewish relatives often are counted as Jews for statistical purposes. According to government figures, among the Jewish population, approximately 4.5 percent are Haredi, or ultra-Orthodox, and another 13 percent are Orthodox. About one-third of the Jewish population describe themselves as “Traditional.” Traditional Jews practice many Jewish traditions but do not consider themselves religious. About half of the Jewish population define themselves as “secular.” Many secular Jews observe some Jewish religious traditions. A growing but still small number of traditional and secular Jews associate themselves with the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist streams of Judaism, which are not officially recognized in the country. However, these streams receive a small amount of government funding and are recognized by the country's courts.

About 20 percent of the population generally are referred to as Israeli Arabs. About 80 percent of Israeli Arabs are Muslim, approximately 10 percent are Christian, and about 10 percent are Druze. The country's Arab population is concentrated in the north, east-central, and southern parts of the country. There also are small numbers of evangelical Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Most Israeli Arabs are concentrated in the north and south of the country. Many Israeli Arabs associate themselves with the secular parties in Israel, including the Communist Party, which has a majority Arab membership. Other Israeli Arabs associate with parties aligned with the Islamic Movement or with small, Arab-centered parties. Many Jews also associate with parties representing their religious or ethno-religious beliefs. The remainder of citizens identify with various secular parties.

There are a number of missionary groups operating in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Israel has no constitution; however, the law provides for freedom of worship, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Declaration of Inde-

pendence describes the country as a “Jewish state,” but also provides for full social and political equality regardless of religious affiliation. The discrepancies that exist in the treatment of various communities in Israeli society are based on several variables, including the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens. Israeli Arabs and other non-Jewish Israelis are, in fact, generally free to practice their religions. Due to the historic influence of Orthodox Jewish political parties, the Government implements certain policies based on interpretations of religious law. For example, the national airline, El Al, and public buses in most cities do not operate on the Sabbath; however, some private bus companies operate on Saturday. According to the law, Jews in most professions may not work on the Sabbath. This law generally is enforced in the retail sector; however, it is inconsistently enforced in the entertainment sector. Additionally, streets in some Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods are closed to vehicles on the Sabbath.

The Government recognizes 5 religions, including 10 Christian groups. The status of some Christian organizations with representation in the country heretofore has been defined by a collection of ad hoc arrangements with various government agencies. Several of these organizations seek to negotiate with the Government in an attempt to formalize their status.

The Government funds both religious and secular schools in the country, including non-Jewish religious and secular schools. Some secular Jewish schools have adopted a religious education program developed by the non-Orthodox streams. Schools in Arab areas, including Arab parochial schools, receive significantly fewer resources than comparable Jewish schools.

Jewish religious holidays such as Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Passover are state holidays. Arab municipalities often recognize Christian and Muslim holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Orthodox Jewish religious authorities have exclusive control over Jewish marriages, divorces, and most burials. Many Jewish citizens object to such exclusive control, and it has been at times a source of serious controversy in society.

Under the Law of Return, the Government grants automatic citizenship and residence rights to Jewish immigrants and their families. Based on a recent decision by the Attorney General, residency rights will not be granted to relatives of converts to Judaism, except to children of female converts who are born after the mother’s conversion is complete. The Law of Return does not apply to non-Jews or to persons of Jewish descent who have converted to another faith. Approximately 36 percent of the country’s Jewish population was born outside of the country. The Government designates nationality on national identity documents, but not on passports. Groups representing persons who consider themselves Jewish but who do not meet the Interior Ministry’s criteria have sought a change in the rules or to have the nationality designation completely removed from identity cards. Many Arab groups also support removing the clause from the cards. In the fall of 2000, then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak initiated an effort to remove the clause from identity cards; however, this policy was not enacted during the period covered by this report.

The Government generally continued to permit Muslim citizens to make the Hajj during the period covered by this report. However, for security reasons, the Government imposes restrictions on its Muslim citizens who perform the Hajj, including requiring that they be over the age of 30. The Government does not allow Hajj pilgrims to return if they leave the country without formal permission. The Government justifies these restrictions on the grounds that Saudi Arabia remains officially at war with the country, and that travel to Saudi Arabia therefore is subject to security considerations.

The Government states that it is committed to granting equal and fair conditions to Israeli Arabs, particularly in the areas of education, housing, and employment. However, the Government does not provide Israeli Arabs, who constitute approximately 20 percent of the population, with the same quality of education, housing, employment, and social services as Jews. In addition, government spending is proportionally far lower in predominantly Arab areas than in Jewish areas; on a per capita basis, the Government spends two-thirds as much for Arabs as for Jews. Although such policies are based on a variety of factors, they reflect de facto discrimination against the country’s non-Jewish citizens.

At least two of the Israel Defense Force (IDF) soldiers who were killed in action since September 2000 were Muslim. Additionally, one of the three IDF soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah in October 2000 is a Muslim. After the family of one of the soldiers who was killed could not find a Muslim cleric to perform his burial, the public focused on the fact that the IDF does not employ a Muslim chaplain. In late 2000, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon ordered the IDF to hire a Muslim chaplain; however,

by the end of the period covered by this report, the IDF was unable to find a Muslim cleric who was willing to serve as an IDF chaplain.

There are approximately 130,000 Bedouin in the Negev; of this number, about half live in 7 state-planned communities and the other half live in 45 settlements that are not recognized by the Government. New building in the unrecognized villages is considered illegal and subject to demolition. In May 2001, the High Court sustained a demolition order for a mosque in the unrecognized village of Husseinya, which was built without a permit in 1996. The mosque had not been demolished by the end of the period covered by this report. In 2000 the Ministry of Interior and the Attorney General declared that residents of Husseinya could list their village's name as their place of residence on their identification cards.

Government funding to the different religious sectors is disproportionate. Non-Orthodox streams of Judaism and the non-Jewish sector receive proportionally less funding than the Orthodox Jewish sector. For example, only 2 percent of the Ministry of Religious Affairs budget goes to the non-Jewish sector. The High Court of Justice heard a case in 1997 alleging that the budgetary allocation to the non-Jewish sector constituted discrimination. In 1998 the Court ruled that the budget allocation constituted "prima facie discrimination" but that the plaintiff's petition did not provide adequate information about the religious needs of the various communities. In May 2000, the same plaintiffs presented a case on the specific needs of religious communities regarding burials. The court agreed that non-Jewish cemeteries were receiving inadequate resources and ordered the Government to increase funding to such cemeteries; the Government had begun implementing this decision by the end of the period covered by this report.

In civic areas in which religion is a determining criterion, such as the religious courts and centers of education, non-Jewish institutions routinely receive less state support than their Orthodox Jewish counterparts.

Government resources available to Arab public schools are less than proportionate to those available to Jewish public schools. Many public schools in Arab communities are dilapidated and overcrowded, lack special education services and counselors, have poor libraries, and have no sports facilities. Israeli Arab private religious schools are considered among the best in the country; however, parents often must pay tuition for their children to attend such schools due to inadequate government funding.

Israeli-Arab organizations have challenged the Government's "Master Plan for the Northern Areas of Israel," which listed as priority goals increasing the Galilee's Jewish population and blocking the territorial contiguity of Arab villages and towns, on the grounds that it discriminates against Arab citizens.

Each recognized religious community has legal authority over its members in matters of marriage and divorce. Secular courts have primacy over questions of inheritance, but parties, by mutual agreement, may bring inheritance cases to religious courts. Jewish and Druze families may ask that some family status matters, such as alimony and child custody, be adjudicated in civil courts as an alternative to religious courts. Christians may only ask that child custody and child support be adjudicated in civil courts as an alternative to religious courts. Muslims have no recourse to civil courts in family-status matters.

Orthodox Jewish religious authorities have exclusive control over Jewish marriages, divorces, and most burials. The State does not recognize marriages or conversions to Judaism performed in the country by non-Orthodox rabbis. In June 2001, the Chief Rabbinate issued new regulations stipulating that immigrants who arrived in the country after 1990 must be investigated to confirm that they are Jewish before they can be married in a Jewish ceremony. Many Israeli Jews who wish to marry in secular or non-Orthodox religious ceremonies do so abroad, and the Ministry of Interior recognizes such marriages. However, many Jewish citizens object to such exclusive control, and it has been at times a source of serious controversy in society, particularly in recent years, as thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union have not been recognized as Jewish by Orthodox authorities. For example, following the Dolphinarium discoteque bombing in June 2001, which killed 21 Israelis, some religious authorities questioned whether several of the young victims, who were immigrants from the former Soviet Union, qualified for Jewish burial. One of the victims ultimately was buried in a special part of a cemetery reserved for persons whose Jewish identity was "in doubt." Newspapers reported that the decision caused pain to many Russian immigrants.

In August 2000, former Prime Minister Barak announced his plans to "separate religion from politics" by promoting a "civil-social revolution," consisting of a number of measures including: Drafting a constitution, incorporating the Ministry of Religious Affairs into the Ministry of Justice, lifting restrictions on transportation during the Sabbath, allowing for some form of civil marriages, eliminating the nation-

ality clause from identification cards, and introducing a new core curriculum in all state-funded schools. These proposals triggered a national debate on religion and society. However, none of these proposed reforms had been implemented by the end of the period covered by this report.

Under the Jewish religious courts' interpretation of personal status law, a Jewish woman may not receive a final writ of divorce without her husband's consent. Consequently, there are thousands of so-called "agunot" in the country who are unable to remarry or have legitimate children because their husbands either have disappeared or refused to grant a divorce.

Rabbinical tribunals have the authority to impose sanctions on husbands who refuse to divorce their wives or on wives who refuse to accept a divorce from their husbands. However, in some cases rabbinical courts have failed to invoke these sanctions. In cases in which a wife refuses to accept a divorce, the rabbinical courts occasionally allow a husband to take a second wife; however, a wife may never take a second husband. Rabbinical courts also may exercise jurisdiction over and issue sanctions against non-Israeli persons present in the country.

A group of more than 100 Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform women continued a long legal battle to hold women's prayer services at the Western Wall. In May 2000, the High Court ruled that women could pray aloud and wear prayer shawls at the Western Wall. In November 2000, an expanded High Court reheard the case; a decision was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Most Orthodox Jews believe that mixed gender prayer services violate the precepts of Judaism, and Jews generally still are unable to hold egalitarian (mixed gender) prayer services at the Western Wall. The Conservative movement is experimenting with conducting services at a different, recently excavated portion of the wall. The North American Reform Movement has rejected such an alternative.

Some Islamic law courts have held that Muslim women may not request a divorce, but that women may be forced to consent if a divorce is granted to a man.

Members of unrecognized religious groups (particularly evangelical Christians), sometimes face problems obtaining marriage certificates or burial services. However, informal arrangements provide relief in some cases.

The Government has recognized only Jewish holy places under the 1967 Protection of Holy Sites Law. However, the Government states that it also protects the holy sites of other faiths. The Government also states that it has provided funds for some holy sites of other faiths. Muslim groups complain that the Government has been reluctant to refurbish mosques in areas where there is no longer a Muslim population.

A 1977 anti-proselytizing law prohibits any person from offering or receiving material benefits as an inducement to conversion; however, there have been no reports of the law's enforcement. A bill that would have restricted proselytizing further was promulgated in 2000; however, similar bills did not reach a final vote in the past and local observers do not believe that this bill will be enacted. Christian and other evangelical groups asserted that the draft bills were discriminatory and served to intimidate Christian groups.

Missionaries are allowed to proselytize, although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) voluntarily refrains from proselytizing under an agreement with the Government.

There were no prosecutions of the over 120 cases of harassment filed by members of Jehovah's Witnesses between 1998 and 2000. There were no complaints of harassment of members of Jehovah's Witnesses during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between different religious groups often are strained, both between Jews and non-Jews and among the different streams of Judaism. Tensions between Jews and non-Jews exist primarily as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and increased significantly during the period covered by this report.

In October 2000, Israeli Arabs held a number of demonstrations in the north to protest against discriminatory governmental policies and the Israeli Defense Force's use of excessive force to disperse Palestinian demonstrators in the occupied territories. Police used rubber bullets and live ammunition to disperse demonstrators, killing 13 Arab citizens and injuring over 300. These events, which coincided with

the beginning of the Intifada in the occupied territories and renewed tension on the country's northern border, significantly harmed Jewish-Arab relations in the country.

Religion generally was not a component of the demonstrations. However, there were a number of violent incidents between Arab and Jewish citizens following the demonstrations, including several incidents in which religious sites were targeted.

In early October 2000, in the Arab town of Sha'faram, a crowd of Arab youths attacked and damaged slightly an ancient synagogue during demonstrations held to protest police actions in nearby towns. The mayor and other Arab citizens of the town attempted unsuccessfully to protect the synagogue. Following the attack, the mayor of Sha'faram apologized publicly to Jewish Israelis.

In October 2000, a crowd of Jewish Israelis attacked and damaged moderately a mosque in Tiberias. Police attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the attack. On the same day, small crowds of Jewish Israelis attempted to damage mosques in Jaffa and Akko; however, police successfully prevented these attacks. Jewish participants in the attack reported that they were angry over Hezbollah's kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers near the border with Lebanon.

In June 2001, after a suicide bomber killed 21 young Israelis at the Dolphinarium discotheque in Tel Aviv, a large crowd of Jews attacked a mosque across the street from the explosion while 8 men were inside. The crowd threw stones at the mosque; however, police prevented the participants from reaching the building. After several hours, police used armored vehicles to evacuate the men from the mosque.

Animosity between secular and religious Jews continued during the period covered by this report. Non-Orthodox Jews have complained of discrimination and intolerance. Persons who consider themselves Jewish but who are not considered Jewish under Orthodox law particularly complained of discrimination. Instances of ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups or individuals verbally or physically harassing women for "immodest dress" or other violations of their interpretation of religious law are not uncommon.

Observant Jews also faced some discrimination. In May 2001, the Beersheva labor court ruled that employers could not discriminate against employees or job applicants who refuse to work on the Sabbath. The case was brought by an engineer who was refused a position because he did not work on the Sabbath. The judge ruled that "an employer is obligated to behave equally towards job seekers, including setting conditions of acceptance that do not take into account the potential employees' beliefs or religion, unless the job functions require distinctions, such as work on the Sabbath."

Israeli Arab groups allege that many employers use the prerequisite of military service to avoid hiring non-Jews, including for jobs that are unrelated to national security.

Israeli Arabs are underrepresented in the student bodies and faculties of most universities and in higher level professional and business ranks. Arab citizens hold only 50 of the country's 5,000 university faculty positions. Well-educated Arabs often are unable to find jobs commensurate with their level of education.

According to the National Insurance Institute, 42 percent of Israeli Arabs live below the poverty line, compared with 20 percent of the total population.

Societal attitudes toward missionary activities and conversion generally are negative. Israeli Jews frequently are opposed to missionary activity directed at Jews and occasionally are hostile toward Jewish converts to Christianity. Such attitudes often are attributed to the frequent periods in Jewish history in which Jews were coerced to convert to Christianity.

Christian and Muslim Israeli Arab religious leaders complain that missionary activity that leads to conversions frequently disrupts family coherence in their community. Muslims consider any conversion from Islam to be apostasy.

In recent years, evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Reform and Conservative Jews complained of incidents of harassment, threats, and vandalism directed against their buildings, and other facilities, many of which were committed by two ultra-Orthodox groups, Yad L'Achim and Lev L'Achim. There were no such incidents reported during the period covered by this report.

There are numerous nongovernmental organizations maintaining dialog between different religions. Interfaith dialog often is linked to the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy consistently raised issues of religious freedom with the Foreign Ministry, the police, and the Prime Minister's office. In March 2001, members of the U.S. International Commission on International Religious Freedom met with gov-

ernment officials, religious leaders, and nongovernmental (NGO) representatives to discuss a number of religious freedom issues.

Embassy representatives, including the Ambassador, routinely meet with religious officials. These contacts included meetings with Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i leaders at a variety of levels.

Embassy officials maintain a dialog with NGO's that follow human and civil rights issues, including religious freedom. These NGO's include the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Israel Religious Action Center, Adalah, and others.

Embassy representatives attended meetings of groups seeking to promote interfaith dialog, including the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, the Anti-Defamation League, and others. The Embassy provided small grants to local organizations promoting interfaith dialog and to organizations examining the role of religion in resolving conflict.

The Occupied Territories (Including Areas Subject to the Jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority)

The Palestinian Authority (PA) does not have a constitution, nor does it have a specific law guaranteeing religious freedom; however, the PA generally respects this right in practice. Although there is no official religion in the occupied territories, Islam is treated de facto as the official religion.

Israel exercises varying degrees of legal control in the West Bank. Israel has no constitution; however, Israeli law provides for freedom of worship, and the Israeli Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of the PA's respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In previous years, there were allegations that a small number of Muslim converts to Christianity were harassed by PA officials; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report. The Israeli Government's closure policies in the occupied territories restricted the ability of Palestinians to reach places of worship, particularly during religious holidays.

There generally are amicable relations between Christians and Muslims. Societal attitudes are a barrier to conversions from Islam. Relations between Jews and non-Jews, as well as among the different branches of Judaism are strained. Following the outbreak of the Intifada in October 2000, there were a number of attacks on places of worship and religious shrines.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the PA in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The occupied territories are composed of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The Gaza Strip covers an area of 143 square miles, and its population is 1,138,563 persons. The West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) covers an area of 2,238 square miles, and its population is approximately 2,191,300 persons. East Jerusalem covers an area of 27 square miles and its population is approximately 390,000 persons.

The vast majority (98.4 percent) of the Palestinian residents of the occupied territories are Sunni Muslims. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, there are 40,055 Palestinian Christians living in the territories. However, according to the sum of estimates provided by individual Christian denominations, the total number of Christians is approximately 200,000. A majority of Christians are Greek Orthodox (approximately 120,000), and there also are a significant number of Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics (about 50,000 total), Protestants, Syriacs, Armenians, Copts, Maronites, and Ethiopian Orthodox. In general Christians are concentrated in the areas of Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem. In early 2001, approximately 1,000 Christians from Bethlehem left the occupied territories for other countries. According to Christian leaders, most of the Christians left their homes for economic and security reasons and not due to religious discrimination. Jewish Israeli settlers reside in the West Bank (approximately 171,000), Gaza (about 6,500), and Jerusalem. There is a community of approximately 550 Samaritans (an ancient offshoot of Judaism) located on Mount Gerazim near Nablus.

Several evangelical Christian missionary groups operate in the West Bank, including the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Foreign missionaries operate in the occupied territories. These include a handful of evangelical Christian pastors who seek to convert Muslims to Christianity. While they maintain a generally low profile, the PA is aware of their activities and generally does not restrict them.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Palestinian Authority has no constitution, and no single law in force protects religious freedom; however, the PA generally respects religious freedom in practice. Although there is no official religion in the occupied territories, Islam is treated de facto as the official religion.

The PA has not adopted legislation regarding religious freedom; however, both the draft Basic Law and the draft Constitution address religion. The draft Basic Law stipulates that "Islam is the official religion in Palestine," and that "respect and sanctity of all other heavenly religions (i.e., Judaism and Christianity) shall be maintained." The draft Basic Law was submitted for PA President Yasser Arafat's signature in 1997; however, it has not been signed into law. The March 2001 version of a draft constitution stipulates that "Islam is the official religion of the State, while other divine religions and their sanctity are respected." It is unclear whether the injunction to "respect" other religions would translate into an effective legal guarantee of religious freedom. The draft Basic Law and Constitution both state that the principles of Shari'a (Islamic law) are the primary bases for legislation.

Churches in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza may be subdivided into three general categories: 1) churches recognized by the status quo agreements reached under Ottoman rule in the late 19th century; 2) Protestant and evangelical churches that were established between the late 19th century and 1967, which are fully tolerated by the PA, although not officially recognized; and 3) a small number of churches that became active within the last decade, whose legal status is more tenuous.

The first group of churches is governed by the 19th century status quo agreements, which the PA respects and which specifically established the presence and rights of the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Assyrian, Greek Catholic, Coptic, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. The Episcopal and Lutheran Churches were added later to the list. These churches and their rights were accepted immediately by the PA, just as the British, Jordanians, and Israelis had done before. Like Shari'a courts under Islam, these religious groups are permitted to have ecclesiastical courts whose rulings are considered legally binding on personal status issues and some land issues. Civil courts do not adjudicate on such matters.

According to the PA, no other churches have applied for official recognition. However, the second group of churches, including the Assembly of God, Nazarene Church, and some Baptist churches, has unwritten understandings with the PA based on the principles of the status quo agreements. They are permitted to operate freely and are able to perform certain personal status legal functions, such as issuing marriage certificates.

The third group of churches consists of a small number of proselytizing churches, including Jehovah's Witnesses and some evangelical Christian groups. These groups have encountered opposition in their efforts to obtain recognition, both from Muslims, who oppose their proselytizing, and Christians, who fear that the new arrivals may disrupt the status quo. These churches generally operate unhindered by the PA. At least one of these churches reportedly planned to request official recognition from the PA during the period covered by this report; however, it deferred its request after the outbreak of the Intifada in October 2000.

In practice the PA requires individuals to be at least nominally affiliated with some religion. Religion must be declared on identification papers, and all personal status legal matters must be handled in either Shari'a or Christian ecclesiastical courts. In the absence of legal protection of religious freedom, there are no statutory or regulatory remedies for violations of that freedom.

Islam is the de facto official religion of the Palestinian Authority, and its Islamic institutions and places of worship receive preferential treatment. The PA has a Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs that pays for the construction and maintenance of mosques and the salaries of many Palestinian imams. The Ministry also provides some Christian clergymen and Christian charitable organizations with limited financial support. The PA does not provide financial support to any Jewish institutions or holy sites in the occupied territories; however, it paid for the refurbishment of Joseph's Tomb after it was damaged by Palestinian demonstrators (see Section II).

The PA requires that religion be taught in PA schools. Until recently, only courses on Islam were taught, and Christian students were excused from them. However, during the period covered by this report, the PA implemented a compulsory curriculum that requires the study of Christianity for Christian students in grades one through six.

The Palestinian Authority observes several religious holidays, including, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Zikra al-Hijra al-Nabawiya, and the Prophet Muhammed's birthday. Christians also may observe the holidays of Christmas and Easter.

The PA does not officially sponsor interfaith dialog; however, it does attempt to foster goodwill among religious leaders. The PA makes a strong effort to maintain good relations with the Christian community, and there is no pattern of PA harassment of Christians. Within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there is a portfolio covering Christian affairs, and PA Chairman Arafat has an advisor on Christian affairs. Six Christians and one Samaritan sit on the 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council in seats set aside for representatives of these religions.

Israel has no constitution; however, the law provides for freedom of worship, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The Israeli Government gives preferential treatment to Jewish residents of the occupied territories and East Jerusalem in the areas of permits for home building and civic services. For example, Muslim Arab residents of Jerusalem pay the same taxes as Jewish residents; however, Arab residents receive significantly fewer municipal services than Jewish residents. There is a general consensus among Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations that many of the national and municipal policies enacted in Jerusalem are designed to limit or diminish the non-Jewish population of Jerusalem. According to these activists, the Israeli Government uses a combination of zoning restrictions on building for Palestinians, confiscation of Palestinian lands, and demolition of Palestinian homes to "contain" non-Jewish neighborhoods.

The Israeli Government attempts to maintain amicable relations with all of the major religious denominations represented in Jerusalem, and to facilitate their worship requirements. For example, the Israeli Government provides police support to facilitate processions in and around the Old City during the Holy Week of Easter.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In previous years, the PA limited speech on religious subjects in some instances.

Since the outbreak of the Intifada, officials in the PA's Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Affairs have prohibited non-Muslims from entering the sanctuary of the Haram al-Sharif. Waqf officials stated that this is a temporary closure because they cannot justify allowing non-Muslims to visit the Haram at a time when Palestinian Muslims from the occupied territories are prevented from worshiping there.

Personal status law for Palestinians is based on religious law. For Muslim Palestinians, personal status law is derived from Shari'a, and the varied ecclesiastical courts rule on personal status issues for Christians. In the West Bank and Gaza, Shari'a pertaining to women is part of the Jordanian Status Law of 1976, which includes inheritances and marriage laws. Under the law, women inherit less than male members of the family do. The marriage law allows men to take more than one wife, although few do so. Women are permitted to make "stipulations" in the marriage contract to protect them in the event of divorce and questions of child custody. However, only an estimated 1 percent of women take advantage of this section of the law, leaving most women at a disadvantage when it comes to divorce or child custody.

Due to the Intifada, political violence escalated significantly during the period covered by this report. At least 654 persons were killed between late September 2000 and late June 2001 in demonstrations, violent clashes, and military and civilian attacks, including 516 Palestinians, 136 Israelis, and 6 foreign nationals. Additionally, at least 14,959 persons were injured during this period. On September 28, Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif) in Jerusalem. On September 29, some Palestinians attending Friday prayer services at the Haram al-Sharif threw stones at police in the vicinity of the Western Wall. Police used rubber-coated metal bullets and live ammunition to disperse the demonstrators, killing 4 persons and injuring approximately 200. Palestinians throughout the occupied territories reacted to this incident by participating in violent demonstrations against IDF soldiers; such demonstrations and ensuing clashes between Palestinians and IDF soldiers occurred daily during the period covered by this report. A number of Israelis and Palestinians also were killed in politically related violence perpetrated by individuals and groups during the year. Israeli settlers harassed, attacked, and sometimes killed Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian civilians also harassed, attacked, and sometimes killed Israelis civilians and settlers.

Due to the increased violence and security concerns, the Israeli Government imposed closure on the occupied territories in October 2000, and this closure still was in place at the end of the period covered by this report. Closure on the West Bank and Gaza and between towns and cities within the occupied territories ("internal closure") impeded significantly freedom of worship for Muslims and Christians dur-

ing the period covered by this report. Even before the outbreak of the Intifada in October 2000, Palestinians in the occupied territories were required to obtain a permit to enter Jerusalem. The Israeli Government frequently denied requests for permits and Israeli security personnel sometimes denied permit holders access to Jerusalem, even to visit holy sites. During periods of closure, Palestinians from the occupied territories were prevented from traveling to pray inside the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. In practice Israeli closure policies prevented tens of thousands of Palestinians from reaching places of worship in Jerusalem and the West Bank, including during religious holidays, such as Ramadan, Christmas, and Easter. On a number of occasions, the Israeli Government also prevented worshipers under the age of 45 from attending Friday prayers inside the Haram al-Sharif; the Israeli Government stated that it did so in an effort to prevent outbreaks of violence following Friday prayers (see Section III). The Israeli Government states that it imposes closure on the occupied territories for security reasons; however, many Palestinians believe that the real purpose of closure is ethnically-based harassment and humiliation.

In early April 2001, Israeli authorities prevented thousands of Muslims from reaching the Nabi Musa shrine near Jericho, the site of an annual three-week Muslim celebration. Israeli officials stated that they decided to cancel the religious festival because the PA intended to turn the event into a "political rally."

During the period covered by this report, due to the Israeli Government's closure policy, a number of Palestinian religious leaders were prevented from reaching their congregations. For example, on March 9, 2001, Israeli soldiers prevented the Latin Patriarch, Michel Sabbah, from entering the town of Ein Areek to perform a Mass. On April 14, 2001, Israeli soldiers prevented the Legal Advisor at the Latin Patriarchate, Majdi al-Siryani, from attending the Ritual of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem. A second group of soldiers then prevented him from reaching a mass in Bethlehem. The Israeli Government pledged to create a "hotline" to facilitate the movement of clerics through checkpoints in March 2001; however, it had not done so by the end of the period covered by this report. Several clergymen reported that they were subject to verbal harassment at checkpoints during the period covered by this report.

Palestinian violence against Israeli settlers sometimes prevented settlers from reaching Jewish holy sites in the occupied territories during the period covered by this report. Other Israelis were unable to reach Jewish sites in the occupied territories such as Rachel's Tomb and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron due to the ongoing violence, including on religious holidays.

A 1995 ruling by the Israeli High Court of Justice theoretically allowed small numbers of Jews under police escort to pray on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. Israeli police consistently have declined to enforce this ruling, citing public safety concerns. Since the outbreak of the Intifada, Israeli police have prevented all non-Muslims (including Jews seeking to pray) from entering the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Since the establishment of the PA, there have been periodic allegations that a small number of Muslim converts to Christianity sometimes are subject to societal discrimination and harassment by PA officials, including detention and questioning by security forces. In recent years, there were several unconfirmed allegations that converts to Christianity were subjected to such treatment. In some cases, conversion may have been only one of several factors leading to the mistreatment. In previous years, the PA stated that it investigated such allegations, but it did not make known to any outside party the results of these investigations.

One Christian religious leader in Jerusalem was attacked by IDF personnel during the period covered by this report. On January 9, 2001, Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint in the West Bank fired at the car of Latin Vice-Patriarch and Archbishop of Nazareth Paul Marcuzzo; his car bore diplomatic license plates and was flying the Vatican flag. Archbishop Marcuzzo was not injured in the shooting. The following day, the Israeli Minister of Justice visited Marcuzzo and apologized for the incident.

According to some Palestinian individuals and human rights organizations, Israeli soldiers sometimes arbitrarily enforced closure to offend religious sensibilities. For example, the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (LAW) reported instances in which Israeli soldiers closed the al-Ram checkpoint at sundown during Ramadan preventing thousands of Muslims from returning home to break their fasts. There also were several unconfirmed accounts that IDF personnel at checkpoints coerced Palestinians to break their fasts during Ramadan as a condition for being allowed to pass through the checkpoint.

On June 4, 2001, the day that Muslims celebrate the Prophet Mohammed's birthday, IDF personnel closed the al-Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron in violation of the Hebron Protocol, which stipulates that the mosque should be available to Muslims worshippers on Muslim holidays. Israeli police personnel also arrested 7 Muslims who were near the mosque.

There is no evidence that the IDF has deliberately targeted places of worship. However, mosques and churches were damaged during exchanges of gunfire between IDF personnel and Palestinian gunmen. For example, on October 20, 2000, IDF gunfire damaged the mosque in the Aida Refugee Camp. On December 20, 2000, Israeli forces reportedly fired at the al-Abrar mosque in Salfit. On several occasions between November 2000 and March 2001, the al-Nur mosque in Rafah reportedly was hit by Israeli shells.

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

Forced Religious Conversions

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 PA or the Israeli Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Generally there are amicable relations between Christians and Muslims. However, tensions do exist and occasionally surface. Relations between Jews and non-Jews, as well as among the different branches of Judaism, often are strained. Tensions between Jews and non-Jews exist primarily as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as Israel's control of access to sites holy to Christians and Muslims. Non-Orthodox Jews have complained of discrimination and intolerance.

Societal attitudes are a barrier to conversions, especially for Muslims converting to Christianity. During the period covered by this report, one senior Christian cleric reportedly quietly dissuaded a number of such prospective converts from being baptized in Jerusalem for fear that they would be ostracized by their families or subjected to violence. In previous years, there were reports that some Christian converts from Islam who publicized their religious beliefs were harassed.

There are some reports of Christian-Muslim tension in the occupied territories. In May and June 2001, Israeli press reports accused Muslim Tanzim militia members of deliberately opening fire on the Israeli neighborhood of Gilo from Christian areas in Beit Jala in order to draw IDF fire onto the Christian homes. In response to inquiries, several Palestinian Christian leaders in the area denied that the shooting was motivated by anti-Christian sentiments.

Interfaith romance is a sensitive issue. Most Christian and Muslim families in the occupied territories encourage their children—especially their daughters—to marry within the faith. Couples that have challenged this societal norm have encountered considerable societal and familial opposition. Some Christian women who have married Muslim men received death threats from Christian family members and community figures.

In general evangelical churches have not been welcomed by the more established Christian denominations.

The strong correlation between religion, ethnicity, and politics in the occupied territories at times imbues the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a religious dimension. The rhetoric of some Jewish and Muslim religious leaders was harsher during the period covered by this report, especially following the outbreak of the Intifada in October 2000. There also were a number of attacks on Muslim and Jewish places worship and religious shrines in the occupied territories. On October 7, following the IDF evacuation from the Jewish religious site of Joseph's Tomb, about 1,000 Palestinian protesters entered the religious site, desecrated religious literature, burned the site, and damaged the roof and an outer wall in an unsuccessful attempt to demolish the tomb. Some Israeli Government officials criticized the PA for failing to prevent the attack. The PA began to repair the tomb the following day.

On October 10, 2000, a crowd of Palestinians attempted to burn the Shalom al Yisrael synagogue in Jericho. The PA began to repair the synagogue immediately following the attack.

On October 10, 2000, a crowd of Jewish settlers threw rocks at apartment buildings that are part of a Franciscan project that provides housing to low-income parishioners on the property of St. James's Latin Church (Mar Ya'acoub) in Beit Hanina. The church itself was not damaged; however, several windows and solar panels on the apartment buildings were broken.

Palestinian human rights groups reported on several incidents in which Israeli settlers vandalized mosques in Hebron in the presence of IDF personnel; the IDF soldiers reportedly did not attempt to intervene. On October 12, 2000, Israeli settlers set fire to a mosque in Huwara, causing more than \$20,000 in damage. On November 21, 2000, settlers set fire to the Imam Ali mosque in Huwara. On December 29, 2000, Israeli settlers ransacked the Prophet Yaqeen mosque in Hebron. On April 8, 2001, settlers vandalized the al-Aqtat mosque in Hebron and desecrated religious literature.

On a number of occasions, Muslims on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif threw stones at Jews who were praying at the Western Wall below (also see Section II).

The rhetoric of some Jewish and Muslim religious leaders was harsh and at times constituted an incitement to violence during the period covered by this report. For example, PA-controlled television stations frequently broadcast anti-Semitic statements by Palestinian political and spiritual leaders and PA officials. Some prominent Israelis also made public anti-Arab statements.

Instances of ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups verbally or physically harassing Jewish citizens for “immodest dress” or other violations of their interpretation of religious law occurred in previous years.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem maintains an ongoing, high-level dialog with officials in the Palestinian Authority, including Chairman Arafat, and (in conjunction with Embassy Tel Aviv) with Israeli officials on human rights issues, including issues of religious freedom. The Consulate also maintains contacts with representatives of the Islamic Waqf—an Islamic trust and charitable organization that owns and manages large amounts of real estate, including the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem—as well as with the various Christian churches and Jewish communities in Jerusalem.

The Consulate investigates allegations of abuses of religious freedom. During the period covered by this report, the Consulate investigated a range of charges, including allegations of Israeli settler violence against places of worship; allegations regarding Christian emigration from the Bethlehem area; allegations regarding the harassment of Christian clergymen in the Jewish Quarter; and allegations concerning access to holy sites.

JORDAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, provided that religious practices are consistent with “public order and morality;” however, the Government imposed some restrictions on freedom of religion. According to the Constitution, Islam is the state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Members of unrecognized religious groups and religious converts from Islam face legal discrimination and bureaucratic difficulties in personal status cases. The Government prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims.

Relations between Muslims and Christians in the country generally are amicable. Adherents of unrecognized religions face some societal discrimination.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 55,436 square miles and its population is approximately 5 million persons. Over 95 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim. Official government figures estimate that Christians make up 4 percent of the population; however, government and Christian officials privately estimate the true figure to be closer to 2 percent. There also are at least 20,000 Druze, a small number of Shi’a Muslims, and less than 800 adherents of the Baha’i faith. There are no statistics available regarding the number of atheists or persons who are not adherents of any particular religious faith.

Officially recognized Christian denominations include the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic (Melkite), Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Catholic, Assyrian, Anglican, Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventist, United Pentecostal, and Presbyterian Churches. Other churches, including the Baptist Church, the Free Evan-

gical Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Assembly of God, and the Christian Missionary Alliance, are registered with the Ministry of Justice as “societies,” but not as churches. Some Egyptian immigrants are adherents of Coptic Christianity and there are a number of both Chaldean and Syriac Christians and Muslim Shi’as represented in the immigrant Iraqi population.

Among the foreign missionaries operating in the country are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons); Jehovah’s Witnesses; Campus Crusaders for Christ; Life Agape; Intersivarsity; Navigators; Christar; Arab World Ministries; Operation Mobilization; Southern Baptist International Mission Board; the Conservative Baptist; Frontiers; Brother Andrew; Jesuits; Christian Brothers; Rosary Sisters; Benedictines; Anglican Church Mission Society; the Society of Friends (Quakers); Comboni Sisters; Little Sisters of Jesus; the Religious of Nazareth; Sisters of St. Dorothy; the Daughters of Mary the Helper (Salesian Sisters); the Little Sisters of Nazareth; the Little Family of the Annunciation; Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition; Basiliennes Chouerites; Focolare Sisters; Franciscans (OFM); Sons of Divine Providence (Don Orione Fathers); Association Fraternal International (AFI); Institute of the Incarnate Word; Franciscans of the Cross; Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine; Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM); Franciscan Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Daughters of Mary of the Enclosed Garden; Theresian Institute; and the Missionaries of Charity.

With few exceptions, there are no major geographic concentrations of particular religious groups. The cities of Husn, in the north, and Fuheis, near Amman, are predominantly Christian. Madaba and Karak, both south of Amman, have significant Christian populations. The northern part of the city of Azraq is predominantly Druze, as is Umm Al-Jabal in the city of Mafraq. There also are significant populations of Druze in Amman and Zarka, and a smaller number of Druze in Irbid and Aqaba. There are a number of nonindigenous Shi’a living in the Jordan Valley and the south of the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for the safeguarding of “all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order or morality;” however, the Government imposes some restrictions on freedom of religion. The Constitution also states that “there shall be no legal discrimination with regard to Jordanians’ rights and duties based on race, language, or religion.” However, some members of unrecognized religious groups and religious converts from Islam face legal discrimination and bureaucratic difficulties in personal status cases.

According to the Constitution, Islam is the state religion. Neither Islam nor the Government recognizes religious faiths other than the three main monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In addition, not all Christian denominations have been accorded legal recognition as religions. Since 1998 the Prime Minister has unofficially conferred with an interfaith council of bishops representing local churches on all matters relating to the Christian community, including the registration of new churches in the country. The Government uses the following criteria when considering recognition of Christian churches as separate official religions: The faith does not contradict the nature of the Constitution, public ethics, customs, or traditions; the faith is recognized by the Middle East Council of Churches; the faith does not oppose the national religion; and the group includes some citizen followers.

According to the Government, the role of the State in religious affairs is limited to supervision. Groups that have practices that violate the law and the nature of Jordanian society—such as Satan worship—are prohibited.

Religious institutions, such as churches that wish to receive official government recognition, must apply to the Prime Ministry for registration. Recognized non-Muslim religious institutions do not receive subsidies; they are financially and administratively independent from the Government and are tax-exempt.

The Muslim feasts of Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, the Prophet Mohammed’s Birthday, the Prophet’s Ascension, and the Islamic New Year are celebrated as national holidays. Christmas and the Gregorian Calendar New Year also are national holidays. Easter is a government holiday for Christians, and Christians may request leave for other Christian feasts prescribed by the local Council of Bishops.

Religious instruction is mandatory for all Muslim students in public schools. Christian and Baha’i students are not required to attend courses in Islam. In 1996 the late King Hussein and the Ministry of Education approved religious instruction for Christian students in public schools. In 1998 the Government established an ex-

perimental program in four districts to incorporate Christian education in the public school curriculum. In 1999 the local Council of Bishops approved the use of the Syrian model of catechism in these test districts; however, the program has not progressed due to a lack of follow-up by both the Ministry of Education and the local Christian hierarchy.

The Constitution provides that congregations have the right to establish schools for the education of their own members “provided that they comply with the general provision of the law and are subject to the control of government in matters relating to their curricula and orientation.”

There are two major government-sponsored institutions that promote interfaith understanding: The Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies and the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research (al-Bayt Foundation). Both institutions sponsor research, international conferences, and discussions on a wide range of religious, social, and historical questions from the perspective of both Muslims and Christians. The Government facilitated the holding of two international Christian conferences in government facilities in September 2000 and May 2001.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government does not recognize the Druze or Baha’i faiths as religions but does not prohibit the practice of the faiths. Druze face official discrimination but do not complain of social discrimination. Baha’is face both official and social discrimination. The Government does not record the bearer’s religion on national identity cards issued to Druze or Baha’is. The small Druze and Baha’i communities do not have their own courts to adjudicate personal status and family matters; such matters are heard in Shari’a courts. The Government does not officially recognize the Druze temple in Azraq, and four social halls belonging to the Druze are registered as “societies.” The Government does not permit Baha’is to register schools or places of worship.

The Government does not recognize Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Church of Christ, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, but each denomination is allowed to conduct religious services and activities without interference.

The Government does not interfere with public worship by the country’s Christian minority. Although the majority of Christians are allowed to practice freely, some activities, such as encouraging Muslims to convert to the Christian faith—considered legally incompatible with Islam—are prohibited.

Shari’a law prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims. Conversion to the Muslim faith by Christians is allowed; however, a Muslim may not convert to another religion. Muslims who convert to other faiths complain of social and government discrimination. The Government does not fully recognize the legality of such conversions. Under Shari’a converts are regarded as apostates and legally may be denied their property and other rights. However, in practice this principle is not applied. According to the Government, it neither encourages nor prohibits apostasy. Converts from Islam do not fall under the jurisdiction of their new religion’s laws in matters of personal status and still are considered Muslims under Shari’a. Conversely, converts to Islam fall under the jurisdiction of the Shari’a courts. Shari’a law prescribes the death penalty for Muslims who convert to another religion; however, there is no corresponding statute under national law, and such punishment has never been applied.

According to one Christian cleric, the Government does not generally prohibit citizens from proselytizing if it is within the limits of the law and based on “the principle of maintaining personal security and safety and provided that it does not contradict the customs and traditions of society.” Government policy requires that foreign missionary groups (which the Government believes are not familiar with the customs and traditions of Jordanian society) refrain from public proselytizing “for the sake of their own personal safety from fundamentalist members of society that oppose such practices.” The Government has taken action against some Christian proselytizers in response to the complaints of recognized Christian groups who charge that the activities of these missionaries “disrupt the cohesiveness and peace between religious groups in the society.”

There were some reports of local government officials encouraging Christian females involved in relationships with Muslim males to convert to Islam to diffuse family or tribal disputes caused by the relationship (see Section III). However, there were no known cases in which local officials harassed or coerced individuals to convert during the period covered by this report.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Trusts manages Islamic institutions and the construction of mosques. It also appoints imams, provides mosque staff salaries, manages Islamic clergy training centers, and subsidizes certain activities sponsored by mosques. The Government loosely monitors sermons at mosques and requires

that speakers refrain from criticizing the Royal Family or instigating social or political unrest.

According to the Constitution, religious community trusts (“Awqaf”) and matters of personal status such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance fall within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Shari’a courts for Muslims, and separate non-Muslim tribunals for each religious community recognized by the Government. There is no civil marriage. The head of the department that manages Shari’a court affairs (a cabinet-level position) appoints Shari’a judges, while each recognized non-Muslim religious community selects the structure and members of its own tribunal. All judicial nominations are approved by the Prime Minister and commissioned officially by royal decree. The Protestant denominations registered as “societies” come under the jurisdiction of one of the recognized Protestant church tribunals. There are no tribunals assigned for atheists or adherents of unrecognized religions. These individuals must request one of the recognized courts to hear their personal status cases.

Shari’a is applied in all matters relating to family law involving Muslims or the children of a Muslim father, and all citizens, including non-Muslims, are subject to Islamic legal provisions regarding inheritance.

All minor children of a male citizen who converts to Islam are automatically considered to be Muslim. Adult children of a male Christian who has converted to Islam become ineligible to inherit from their father if they do not themselves convert to Islam. In cases in which a Muslim converts to Christianity, the act is not legally recognized by the authorities, and the subject continues to be treated as a Muslim in matters of family and property law, and the minor children of a male Muslim who converts to Christianity continue to be treated as Muslims under the law.

Some Christians are unable to divorce under the legal system because they are subject to their faith’s religious court system, which does not allow divorce. Many of these individuals convert to another Christian denomination or the Muslim faith in order to divorce legally.

The Government notes individuals’ religions (except for Druze, Baha’is, and other unrecognized religions) on the national identity card and “family book” (a national registration record that is issued to the head of every family and that serves as proof of citizenship) of all citizens. Atheists must associate themselves with a recognized religion for official identification purposes.

The Government traditionally reserves some positions in the upper levels of the military for Christians; however, all senior command positions have been traditionally reserved for Muslims. Division-level commanders and above are required to lead Islamic prayer for certain occasions. There are no Christian clergy in the military.

In early 2000, radical Islamists criticized a poem published by Muslim poet Musa Hawamdeh. In March 2000, the Government banned the book in which the poem was published. In June 2000, Hawamdeh was summoned to a Shari’a court to face allegations of apostasy. The complainant requested that Hawamdeh publicly retract the controversial statements in his poem and requested that the Shari’a judge order that he divorce his wife and lose his rights to inherit property or manage his own wealth. The Shari’a court referred the case to a civil court. In July 2000, Hawamdeh, without retracting any portion of his poem, was acquitted on all charges in both the Shari’a and civil courts. However, according to June 2001 press reports, the Shari’a appeals court ordered Hawamdeh retried on the apostasy charge. According to some reports, the retrial is based on a procedural error; however, some observers believe that the procedural error is being used as a pretext to continue harassing the poet. At the end of the period covered by this report, most observers believed that the Shari’a court would find Hawamdeh innocent of apostasy.

In June 2000, due to a dispute stemming from an intrachurch rivalry between the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the Antioch Orthodox Patriarchate, the Government closed an Arab Orthodox church in Amman that was aligned with the Antioch Patriarch in Damascus, Syria. The Government closed the church following a request from the local Orthodox hierarchy to enforce a 1958 law that grants the Jerusalem Patriarchate authority over all Orthodox churches in the country. The church reopened in December 2000 with permission from the Government, but was closed again a week later based largely on pressure from the Orthodox hierarchy. The Government stated that the church was free to open under a different name that would not imply affiliation with the Orthodox Church. The church remained closed at the end of the period covered by this report (see Section III).

Non-Jordanian Christian missionaries operate in the country but are subject to restrictions. Christian missionaries may not proselytize Muslims. During the period covered by this report, U.S.-affiliated Christian mission groups in the country con-

tinued to complain of bureaucratic difficulties, including refusal by the Government to renew residence permits.

In February 2000, the governor of the Amman municipality closed the office of Life Agape—an organization associated with the Baptist Church—after the director refused to sign a letter stating that he would not “deal with Muslims.” The office remained closed at the end of the period covered by this report.

In April and September 1999, a foreign employee of a small language school in Amman applied for a residence permit from the Ministry of Interior. His application was denied, reportedly because government officials believed that he had been trying to convert Muslims to Christianity. He reapplied in April 2000 and was still awaiting a response from the Government at the end of the period covered by this report.

In December 1999, the municipality of Amman closed the Roy and Dora Whitman Academy—a small, nonprofit school founded by U.S.-affiliated missionaries in Amman—because it was not registered with the Ministry of Education. The board of the academy had initiated the process of registering the school in 1997. After being contacted by embassies representing a number of countries, the Ministry of Education assisted the school in properly fulfilling registration requirements. In April 2000, the school received registration and once again began teaching students. In July 2000, the Ministry of Labor issued work permits to two faculty members at the school.

The Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS), a Christian training school for pastors and missionaries, applied in August 1998 for a permit to purchase land on which to construct a seminary and campus. In May 1999, permission was granted to purchase the land on the condition that JETS receive accreditation from the Ministry of Education. In May 1999, JETS submitted its first application for registration to the Council of Higher Education (CHE). However, pending such registration authorities suspended renewal of the residence permits of all of the seminary's 36 foreign students and 2 members of the faculty. In 1998 and early 1999, some noncitizen Arab Muslim students were deported or asked to leave the country as a result of their association with JETS. In mid-1999, the Ministry of Interior issued visas and residence permits to some students and staff of JETS. However, in September 1999, JETS received a letter from the CHE stating that it had postponed reviewing the application until “a complete strategy for higher education was in place.” In December 1999, the Ministry again began refusing to issue or to renew visas or resident permits for students and staff of the school until it received accreditation from the Ministry of Education. JETS reapplied for registration in January 2000. In May 2000, the Secretary General of the CHE told JETS that the CHE may not register colleges that have religion as the only discipline of study. In February 2001, JETS submitted a third application to the Ministry of Education with an expanded curriculum. At the request of the CHE, the application also contained a new name without the word “evangelical”—Jordan Minara University. At the end of the period covered by this report, the school's application still was pending, and the Ministry's failure to issue visas has affected 24 of 140 students (and their families), as well as 4 staff members at the school.

During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, all citizens, including non-Muslims, are discouraged from eating, drinking, or smoking in public or in vehicles and are discouraged strongly from dressing in a manner that is considered inconsistent with Islamic standards. Restaurants are closed during daylight hours unless specifically exempted by the Government and alcohol is only served in those facilities catering specifically to tourists.

Of the 80 seats in the Lower House of Parliament, 9 are reserved for Christians. No seats are reserved for Druze or adherents of other religious faiths. The country's parliamentary election law historically has limited the number of Islamists elected to Parliament. The major Islamic political party boycotted the 1997 elections, stating that the election law must be amended before it will participate in future elections. On June 16, 2001, the King dissolved Parliament and charged the Government with drafting a new election law. In March 2000, Jordan University amended the student council election law, granting the university president the authority to appoint half of the university's 80-member student council, including the chair. This decision reportedly was made to curb the influence of Islamists on campus. In April 2000, many students—Islamists and non-Islamists—protested this decision. Islamist groups also called for a boycott of the elections on April 25, 2000 and some persons associated with these groups physically attempted to prevent students from voting.

The Political Parties Law prohibits houses of worship from being used for political party activity. The law was designed primarily to prevent Islamist politicians from preaching in mosques.

Under Shari'a as applied in the country, female heirs receive half the amount of a male heir's inheritance, and the non-Muslim widow of Muslim spouses has no inheritance rights. A sole female heir receives half her parents' estate; the balance goes to designated male relatives. A sole male heir inherits both of his parents' property. Male Muslim heirs have the duty to provide for all family members who need assistance. Men are able to divorce their spouses more easily than women.

Shari'a as applied in the country regards the testimony of a woman to be equal to half that of a man. This provision technically applies only in religious courts; however, in the past it has been imposed in civil courts as well, regardless of religion.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners who remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report. However, the security services detained approximately 50 persons, described in the press as "Islamists" during the period covered by this report. These detentions were related to allegations of involvement in terrorist or strictly political activities rather than religious affiliation or belief.

In October 2000 and May 2001, security forces briefly detained and released several Muslim religious leaders for inciting public unrest following the outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence in the West Bank and Gaza.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. However, according to Jordanian law the father of the child may restrict the child's travel. There reportedly are at least 35 cases of U.S. citizen children residing in Jordan against the will of their U.S. citizen mothers. Under the law, these children are considered Muslim if their fathers are Muslim.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In July 2000, the Ministry of Labor issued work permits to two faculty members at the Roy and Dora Whitman Academy, a small, nonprofit school founded by U.S.-affiliated missionaries in Amman.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between Muslims and Christians in the country generally are amicable. Relations within the Christian community sometimes are difficult, especially among the evangelical Christian community. In June 2000, due to a dispute stemming from an intrachurch rivalry between the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the Antioch Orthodox Patriarchate, the Government closed an Arab Orthodox church in Amman, which was aligned with the Antioch Patriarch in Damascus, Syria (also see Section II).

In general Christians do not suffer discrimination. Christians hold high-level government and private sector positions and are represented in the media and academia approximately in proportion to their presence in the general population. Senior command positions in the military traditionally have been reserved for Muslims (see Section II). Baha'is face some societal and official discrimination.

The majority of the indigenous population views religion as central to personal identity and religious conversions are not widely tolerated. Muslims who convert to other religions often face social ostracism, threats, and abuse from their families and Muslim religious leaders. Romantic relationships between members of different religions, which may lead to conversion—either to the Muslim or Christian faiths—usually are strongly discouraged by the families. Interfaith relationships may lead to ostracism and, in some cases, violence against the couple or feuds between members of the couple's families. When such situations arise, families may approach local government officials for resolution. There were reports that in some cases, local government officials encouraged Christian women involved in relationships with Muslim men to convert to Islam in order to defuse potential family or tribal problems. However, there were no known cases in which local officials harassed or coerced persons to convert. In previous years, when the Government intervened, it sometimes placed the women concerned into "protective custody" to prevent retribution by one of the families.

Employment applications occasionally contain questions about an applicant's religion.

During the period covered by this report, local newspapers occasionally published articles critical of evangelical organizations.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials raised religious freedom and other human rights issues with government authorities on a number of occasions. Embassy officers met frequently with members of the various religious and missionary communities in the country, as well as with private religious organizations. Embassy officers assisted private religious groups to obtain official registration during the period covered by this report. The Embassy's American Citizens' Services officer is in regular contact with members of the American missionary community in the country, many of whom serve as emergency wardens.

In January 2001, the Embassy sponsored a successful program on interreligious dialog and tolerance by Dr. Mahmoud Ayoub, a professor of religion at a university in the United States.

KUWAIT

Islam is the state religion; although the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, the Government places some limits on this right. The Constitution also provides that the State protect the freedom to practice religion in accordance with established customs, "provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals." The Constitution states that Shari'a (Islamic law) is "a main source of legislation."

There was some improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, particularly for the country's Shi'a. The Government licensed the construction of three new Shi'a mosques. It overturned a decision by the municipality of Kuwait to deny the Government-approved construction of a mosque in the Al-Qurain area (approval had been pending for 9 years). The Government also resolved two longstanding Shi'a concerns by creating a Shi'a appellate court to try family law cases and approving the creation of a Shi'a charity authority comparable to the Sunni Awqaf (Ministry of Islamic Affairs) and nongovernmental entities. The Government prohibits proselytizing of Muslims and prohibits the naturalization of non-Muslims.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total land area is 6,880 square miles and its population is 2.2 million. Of the country's total population, approximately 1.5 million persons are Muslim, including the vast majority of its 820,000 citizens. The remainder of the overall population consists of the large foreign labor force and nearly 100,000 Arabs with residence ties to Kuwait who claim to have no documentation of their nationality. The ruling family and many prominent families belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. The total Sunni Muslim population is over 1 million, about 525,000 of whom are citizens. The remaining 30 to 40 percent of Muslim residents (approximately 550,000) are Shi'a, nearly 300,000 of whom are citizens. Estimates of the nominal Christian population range from 250,000 to 500,000 (including approximately 200 citizens, most of whom belong to 12 large families).

The Christian community includes the Roman Catholic Diocese, with 2 churches and an estimated 75,000 members (Maronite Christians also worship at the Catholic cathedral in Kuwait city); the Anglican (Episcopalian) Church, with 115 members (several thousand other Christians use the Anglican Church for worship services); the National Evangelical Church (Protestant), with 3 main congregations (Arabic, English, and "Malayalee") and 15,000 members (several other Christian denominations also worship at the National Evangelical Church Compound); the Greek Orthodox Church (referred to locally as the "Roman Orthodox" Church), with 3,500 members; the Armenian Orthodox Church, with 4,000 members; the Coptic Orthodox Church, with 60,000 members; and the Greek Catholic (Eastern Rite) Church, whose membership totals are unavailable.

There are many other unrecognized Christian denominations in the country, with tens of thousands of members. These denominations include Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Marthoma, and the Indian Orthodox Syrian Church.

There are also members of religions not sanctioned in the Koran, such as Hindus (100,000 adherents), Sikhs (10,000), Baha'is (400), and Buddhists (no statistics available).

There are no available statistics on the number of atheists.

Missionary groups in the country serve non-Muslim congregations.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Islam is the state religion; although the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, the Government places some limits on this right. The Constitution also provides that the State protect the freedom to practice religion in accordance with established customs, "provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals." The Constitution states that Shari'a is "a main source of legislation."

The procedures for registration and licensing of religious groups are unclear. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has official responsibility for overseeing religious groups. Officially recognized churches must deal with a variety of government entities, including the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (for visas and residence permits for pastors and other staff) and the municipality of Kuwait (for building permits). While there reportedly is no official government "list" of recognized churches, seven Christian churches have at least some form of official recognition that enables them to operate openly. These seven churches have open "files" at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, allowing them to bring in the pastors and staff necessary to operate their churches. Further, by tradition three of the country's churches are widely recognized as enjoying "full recognition" by the Government and are allowed to operate compounds officially designated as churches: The Catholic Church (both the Roman Catholic Church and the Maronite Church), the Anglican Church, and the National Evangelical Protestant Church of Kuwait. The Roman Catholic Church faces problems of overcrowding at its two official church facilities. Its cathedral in downtown Kuwait City regularly draws as many as 100,000 worshippers to its more than 30 weekly services.

The other four churches reportedly are allowed to operate openly, hire employees, invite religious speakers, etc., all without interference from the Government; however, their compounds are, according to government records, registered only as private homes. Church officials themselves appear uncertain about the guidelines or procedures for recognition. Some have argued that these procedures are purposely kept vague by the Government so as to maintain the status quo. No other churches and religions have legal status but they are allowed to operate in private homes.

The procedures for registration and licensing of religious groups also appear to be connected with government restrictions on nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), religious or otherwise. In 1993 all unlicensed organizations were ordered by the Council of Ministers to cease their activities. This order never has been enforced; however, since that time all but three applications by NGO's have been frozen. There were reports that in the last few years at least two groups have applied for permission to build their own churches, but the Government has not responded to their requests.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Shi'a are free to conduct their traditional forms of worship without government interference; however, members of the Shi'a community have complained about the scarcity of Shi'a mosques due to the Government's slow approval of the construction of new Shi'a mosques and the repair of existing mosques, or of its failure to approve such construction or repair at all. The community was particularly critical in May 2000 when the municipality of Kuwait rejected a 9-year-old petition for construction of a Shi'a mosque in the Al-Qurain area. Although the municipality apparently relented due to direct government intervention, there still are complaints about the lack of sufficient Shi'a mosques. (There are approximately 30 Shi'a mosques compared with the 1,300 Sunni mosques in the country.) During the period covered by the report, the Government began to address such concerns by approving the construction of three new Shi'a mosques. The Government resolved two other longstanding Shi'a concerns by creating a Shi'a appellate court to try family law cases (Shi'a and Sunni family law differ in some details) and by approving the creation of a Shia charity authority comparable to the Sunni Awqaf (which formerly controlled all government and private donations to religious charities).

Shi'a leaders also have complained that Shi'a who aspire to serve as imams are forced to seek appropriate training and education abroad due to the lack of Shi'a jurisprudence courses at Kuwait University's College of Islamic Law, which only offers Sunni jurisprudence. However, to address this longstanding concern the Min-

istry of Education currently is reviewing an application to establish a private college to train Shi'a clerics within the country. If approved the new college could reduce Shi'a dependence on foreign study, particularly in Iran, for the training of Shi'a clerics. Shi'a reportedly no longer express concern that certain pending proposed legislation within the National Assembly does not take beliefs specific to the Shi'a into account.

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, National Evangelical, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, and Greek Catholic Churches operate freely on their compounds, holding worship services without government interference. These leaders also state that the Government generally has been supportive of their presence, even providing police security and traffic control as needed. Other Christian denominations (including Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, Marthoma, and Indian Orthodox), while not recognized legally, are allowed to operate in private homes or in the facilities of recognized churches. Members of these congregations have reported that they are able to worship without government interference, provided that they do not disturb their neighbors and do not violate laws regarding assembly and proselytizing.

Members of religions not sanctioned in the Koran, such as Hindus and Buddhists, may not build places of worship, but are allowed to worship privately in their homes without interference from the Government.

The Government prohibits missionaries from proselytizing to Muslims; however, they may serve non-Muslim congregations. The law prohibits organized religious education for religions other than Islam, although this law is not enforced rigidly. Informal religious instruction occurs inside private homes and on church compounds without government interference. However, there were reports that government inspectors from the Awqaf Ministry periodically visit public and private schools outside of church compounds to ensure that religious teaching other than Islam does not take place. The Roman Catholic Church has requested that Catholic students be allowed to study the catechism separately during the period in which Muslim students receive mandatory instruction in Islam. The Government did not respond to the request during the period covered by this report.

The Government does not permit the establishment of non-Islamic publishing companies or training institutions for clergy. Nevertheless, several churches do publish religious materials for use solely by their congregations. Further, some churches, in the privacy of their compounds, provide informal instruction to individuals interested in joining the clergy.

A private company, the Book House Company Ltd., is permitted to import a significant number of Bibles and other Christian religious material—including, as of early 2000, videotapes and compact discs—for use solely among the congregations of the country's recognized churches. The Book House Company is the only bookstore that has an import license to bring in such materials, which also must be approved by government censors. There have been reports of private citizens having non-Islamic religious materials confiscated by customs officials upon arrival at the airport.

Although there is a small community of Christian citizens, a law passed in 1980 prohibits the naturalization of non-Muslims. However, citizens who were Christians before 1980 (and children born to families of such citizens since that date) are allowed to transmit their citizenship to their children.

According to the law, a non-Muslim male must convert to Islam when he marries a Muslim woman if the wedding is to be legal in the country. A non-Muslim female does not have to convert to Islam to marry a Muslim male, but it is to her advantage to do so. Failure to convert may mean that, should the couple later divorce, the Muslim father would be granted custody of any children.

Women continue to experience legal and social discrimination. In the family courts, one man's testimony is sometimes given the same weight as the testimony of two women; however, in the civil, criminal, and administrative courts, the testimony of women and men is considered equally. Unmarried women 21 years old and over are free to obtain a passport and travel abroad at any time. However, married women who apply for passports must obtain their husbands' signature on the application form. Once she has a passport, a married woman does not need her husband's permission to travel, but he may prevent her departure from the country by contacting the immigration authorities and placing a 24-hour travel ban on her. After this 24-hour period, a court order is required if the husband still wishes to prevent his wife from leaving the country. All minor children must have their father's permission to travel outside of the country.

Inheritance is governed by Islamic law, which differs according to the branch of Islam. In the absence of a direct male heir, Shi'a women may inherit all property,

while Sunni women inherit only a portion, with the balance divided among brothers, uncles, and male cousins of the deceased.

The joint interministerial committee formed by the Government in 2000 to study ways to control extremist groups reported no findings during the period covered by this report.

The law requires jail terms for journalists who ridicule religion. In the period covered by this report, Islamists used this law to threaten writers with prosecution for publishing opinions deemed insufficiently observant of Islamic norms. However, there were no instances in the period covered by this report of religiously based prosecutions of authors or journalists. In January 2000, the Court of Misdemeanors found two female authors, Alia Shuaib and Leila Al-Othman, guilty of writing books that were blasphemous and obscene. Shuaib and Al-Othman were sentenced to 2 months in prison which could be suspended upon payment of a \$160 (50 Kuwaiti dinars) fine. In March 2000, an appeals court acquitted Shuaib of the charges of blasphemy and publishing works that ridicule religion. Al-Othman's conviction of using indecent language was upheld. The court's judgments represented the latest in a series of cases brought by Islamists against secular authors. The court did not provide explanations for its rulings.

A Vatican mission, headed by a Charge d'Affaires, has been established in the country to represent Vatican interests in the Gulf states and Yemen. The Charge d'Affaires moved into permanent offices during the period covered in this report. The Catholic Church views the Government's acquiescence to establish relations with the Vatican as significant in terms of government tolerance of Christianity.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. There have been cases in which U.S. citizen children have been abducted from the United States and not allowed to return (under the law, the father receives custody in such cases, and his permission is required for the children to leave the country); however, there were no reports that such children were forced to convert to Islam, or that forced conversion was the reason that they were not allowed to return.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The overall situation for Shi'a improved during the period covered by this report. The Government licensed the construction of three new mosques. It also overturned a decision by the municipality of Kuwait to deny the government-approved construction of a mosque in the Al-Qurain area. In addition the Government took steps toward greater equality for Shi'a by creating a distinct appellate court to try Shi'a family law cases and by agreeing to establish an independent Shi'a charity authority to manage Shi'a donations.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general, there are amicable relations among the various religions, and citizens generally are open and tolerant of other religions. While there is a small minority of ultraconservatives opposed to the presence of non-Muslim groups, there were no new reports of vandalism or other actions against the country's Christian churches during the period covered by this report.

In April 2000, the Government arrested seven men for allegedly beating a 19-year-old woman for not wearing a "hijab" (head scarf). The Government acted quickly in bringing the seven men to trial, criticizing the assault as a vigilante action by extremists. The case prompted a lively debate in society and the press. Most citizens expressed outrage, viewing the attack as a direct assault on their personal freedoms, while Islamists urged against making hasty judgments. Conflicting versions of what exactly occurred and the motives involved emerged during the trial, and the criminal court acquitted all seven accused men in June, finding that there was insufficient evidence to convict them. In November 2000, the Court of Appeals overturned the acquittal of five of the seven men, and sentenced four to 1 year in prison and \$6,000 (2,000 dinars) each in compensatory damages. The fifth man was ordered to pay \$3,000 (1,000 dinars) with no jail term.

Also in April 2000, unidentified gunmen fired shots at a "husseiniya" (religious meeting place for Shi'a). Although the identities of the assailants were never determined, the incident contributed to a perception by some that extremists (the presumed attackers) are becoming increasingly disruptive to society. There were no reports of such shootings during the period covered by this report.

While some discrimination based on religion reportedly occurs on a personal level, most observers agree that it is not widespread. There is a perception among some domestic employees and other members of the unskilled labor force, particularly nationals of Southeast Asian countries, that they would receive better treatment from employers as well as society as a whole if they converted to Islam. However, others do not see conversion to Islam as a factor in this regard.

The conversion of Muslims to other religions is a very sensitive matter. While it is reported that such conversions have occurred, they have been done quietly and discreetly. Muslim conversions that become public are likely to cause hostility within society, as demonstrated by a 1996 case in which the convert received death threats.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

U.S. Embassy officials frequently meet with representatives from Sunni, Shi'a, and various Christian groups. Intensive monitoring of religious issues has long been an embassy priority. Embassy officers have met with most of the leaders of the country's recognized Christian churches, as well as representatives of various unrecognized faiths. Such meetings have afforded embassy officials the opportunity to learn the status and concerns of these groups.

LEBANON

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Discrimination based on religion is built into the system of government.

Citizens still are struggling with the legacy of a 15-year civil war fought along religious lines. There are periodic reports of friction between religious groups; however, it frequently is difficult to distinguish between political and religious differences. There are no legal barriers to proselytizing; however, traditional attitudes and edicts of the clerical establishment discourage such activity.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 4,035 square miles and its population is approximately 3–3.5 million. Because the matter of religious balance is such a sensitive political issue, a national census has not been conducted since 1932, before the founding of the modern Lebanese State. Consequently there is an absence of accurate data on the relative percentages of the population of the major religions and groups. Most observers believe that Muslims make up the majority, but Muslims do not represent a homogenous group. There also are a variety of other religious groups, primarily from the Christian denominations, as well as a small Jewish population.

There are 18 officially recognized religious groups. Their ecclesiastical and demographic patterns are extremely complex. Divisions and rivalries between groups date back as far as 15 centuries, and still are a factor today. The pattern of settlement has changed little since the 7th century, although there has been a steady numerical decline in the number of Christians compared to Muslims. The main branches of Islam are Shi'a and Sunni. Since the 11th century, there has been a sizable Druze presence, concentrated in rural, mountainous areas east and south of Beirut. The smallest Muslim minorities are the Alawites and the Ismaili ("Sevener") Shi'a order. The "Twelver" Shi'a, Sunni, and Druze each have state-appointed clerical bodies to administer family and personal status law through their own religious courts, which are subsidized by the State. The Maronites are the largest of the Christian groups. They have had a long and continuous association with the Roman Catholic Church, but have their own patriarch, liturgy, and customs. The second largest group is the Greek Orthodox Church (composed of ethnic Arabs who maintain a Greek-language liturgy). The remainder of the Christians are divided among Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox (Gregorians), Armenian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox (Jacobites), Syrian Catholics, Assyrians (Nestorians), Chaldeans, Copts, evangelicals (including

Protestant groups such as the Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Friends), and Latins (Roman Catholic). There also are some atheists in the country.

There are a number of foreign missionaries in the country, primarily from Catholic and evangelical Christian churches.

The country's religious pluralism and climate of religious freedom have attracted many refugees fleeing religious persecution in neighboring states. They include Kurds, Shi'a, and Chaldeans from Iraq and Coptic Christians from Egypt and Sudan.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The State is required to ensure the free exercise of all religious rites with the caveat that public order not be disturbed. The Constitution also provides that the personal status and religious interests of the population be respected. The Government permits recognized religions to exercise authority over matters pertaining to personal status such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. There is no state religion; however, politics are based on the principle of religious representation, which has been applied to every conceivable aspect of public life. The unwritten "National Pact" of 1943 stipulates that the President, the Prime Minister, and the Speaker of Parliament be a Maronite Christian, a Sunni Muslim, and a Shi'a Muslim, respectively. The Taif Accord, which ended Lebanon's 15-year civil war in 1989, reaffirmed this arrangement but resulted in increased Muslim representation in Parliament and reduced the power of the Maronite President.

A group that seeks official recognition must submit its dogma and moral principles for government review to ensure that such principles do not contradict popular values and the Constitution. The group must ensure that the number of its adherents is sufficient to maintain its continuity.

Alternatively, religious groups may apply to obtain recognition through existing religious groups. Official recognition conveys certain benefits, such as tax-exempt status and the right to apply the religion's codes to personal status matters. An individual may change his religion if the head of the religious group approves of this change.

The Government allows private religious education. The issue of religious education in public schools no longer is the subject of vigorous debate. Muslim and Christian clergy currently are working together to prepare unified religious educational materials to be used in public schools.

A number of both Christian and Muslim religious holidays are considered national holidays. The Christian holidays are Christmas, Good Friday, Easter (for both Western and Eastern rites), St. Maroun Day, All Saints Day, Assumption Day, and New Year. The Muslim holidays are Eid al-Adha, the Muslim New Year, the Prophet Mohammed's birthday, Eid al-Fitr, and Ashura. The Government also excuses from work public sector employees of the Armenian churches on Armenian Christmas and St. Vartan Day.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding by supporting a committee on Islamic-Christian dialog, which is cochaired by a Muslim and a Christian, and includes representatives of the major religious groups. Leading religious figures who promote Islamic-Christian dialog and ecumenicism are encouraged to visit and are received by government officials at the highest levels.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The 1989 Taif Accord called for the ultimate abolition of political sectarianism in favor of "expertise and competence." However, little substantive progress has been made in this regard. A "Committee for Abolishing Confessionalism," called for in the Taif Accord, has not yet been formed. One notable exception is the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which, through universal conscription and an emphasis on professionalism, has significantly reduced the role of confessionalism (or religious sectarianism) in that organization. Christians and Muslims are represented equally in the Parliament. Seats in the Parliament and Cabinet, and posts in the civil service, are distributed proportionally among the 18 recognized groups. State recognition is not a legal requirement for religious practice. For example, although Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus are not recognized officially, they are allowed to practice their faith without government interference; however, they legally may not marry, divorce, or inherit in the country.

Many families have relatives who belong to different religious communities, and intermarriage is not uncommon; however, intermarriage may be difficult to arrange

in practice between members of some groups because there are no procedures for civil marriage. An attempt in 1998 by then-President Elias Hrawi to forward legislation permitting civil marriage failed in the face of opposition from the religious leadership of all confessions. However, civil ceremonies performed outside the country are recognized by the State.

The Government does not require citizens' religious affiliations to be indicated on their passports; however, the Government requires that religious affiliation be encoded on national identity cards.

Publishing of religious materials in different languages is permitted.

Religious groups administer their own family and personal status laws (see Section II). Many of these laws discriminate against women. For example, Sunni inheritance law provides a son twice the inheritance of a daughter. Although Muslim men may divorce easily, Muslim women may do so only with the concurrence of their husbands.

Article 473 of the Penal Code stipulates that one who "blasphemes God publicly" will face imprisonment for up to a year. In 1999 a leading singer and songwriter was accused of insulting Islam for incorporating lines from a poem based on verses from the Koran into a song; however, he was acquitted of the charges in December 1999. No one was prosecuted under this law during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Citizens still are struggling with the legacy of a 15-year civil war fought along religious lines. Some of the harshest fighting of the war occurred within religious groups.

There are no legal barriers to proselytizing; however, traditional attitudes and edicts of the clerical establishment strongly discourage such activity. There were reports that members of the Christian community in Kesirwan with the knowledge of local clergy occasionally harassed verbally church leaders and persons who attend an unrecognized Protestant evangelical church.

The Committee of Islamic-Christian Dialog remains the most significant institution for fostering amicable relations between religious communities.

On October 3, 1999, one person was killed when a bomb exploded in a Maronite church in an eastern Beirut suburb. There were no arrests made in this case during the period covered by this report.

Throughout the fall of 1999, approximately 6 random bombings were carried out against Orthodox churches and shops that sold liquor; the bombings took place in the northern city of Tripoli and in surrounding areas (see Section II). The Government suspected that radical Sunni extremists carried out the bombings in retaliation for Russian military operations in Chechnya. Police officials detained and allegedly tortured a number of Sunni youths for suspected involvement in these bombings. Police arrested four persons in connection with the bombings and their trials were underway at the end of the period covered by this report.

Clerics play a leading role in many ecumenical movements worldwide. For example, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch, Aram I, is the moderator for the World Council of Churches. The Imam Musa Sadr Foundation also has played a role in fostering the ecumenical message of Musa Sadr, a Shi'a cleric who disappeared in Libya in 1978.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. policy supports the preservation of pluralism and religious freedom, and the U.S. Embassy advances that goal through contacts at all levels of society, public remarks, embassy public affairs programs, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programming. The issue of political sectarianism remains a delicate one. The United States supports the principles of the Taif Accord and embassy staff regularly discuss the issue of sectarianism with political, religious, and civic leaders. Embassy staff members meet periodically with the leadership—both national and regional—of officially recognized groups, all of whom have a long tradition of meeting with foreign diplomats and discussing issues of general public interest. The Embassy regularly attends events sponsored by the Committee on Islamic-Christian Dialog. USAID programs in rural areas of the country also require civic participation,

often involving villages of different religious backgrounds, with the aim of promoting cooperation between religions.

LIBYA

The Government restricts freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. According to recent reports, persons rarely are harassed because of their religious practices unless such practices are perceived as having a political dimension or motivation.

Information regarding relations among the country's different religious groups is limited.

The U.S. Government has no official presence in the country and maintains no bilateral dialog with the Government.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total land area is approximately 679,362 square miles and its population is approximately 5,115,450. The country is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim (97 to 98 percent). There are small Christian communities, composed almost exclusively of foreigners. There is a small Anglican community, made up mostly of African immigrant workers in Tripoli, that is part of the Egyptian Diocese; the Anglican Bishop of Libya is resident in Cairo. There are Union churches in Tripoli and Benghazi. There are an estimated 40,000 Roman Catholics who are served by 2 Bishops—1 in Tripoli (serving the Italian community) and 1 in Benghazi (serving the Maltese community). Catholic priests and nuns serve in all the main coastal cities, and there is one priest in the southern city of Sebha. Most of them work in hospitals and with the handicapped; they enjoy good relations with the Government. There are also Coptic and Greek Orthodox priests in both Tripoli and Benghazi.

In March 1997, the Vatican established diplomatic relations with the country, stating that Libya had taken steps to protect freedom of religion. The Vatican hoped to be able to address more adequately the needs of the estimated 50,000 Christians in the country.

There still may be a very small number of Jews. Most of the Jewish community, which numbered around 35,000 in 1948, left for Italy at various stages between 1948 and 1967. The Government has been rehabilitating the "medina" (old city) in Tripoli and has renovated the large synagogue there; however, the synagogue has not reopened.

Adherents of other non-Muslim religions, such as Hindus, Baha'is, and Buddhists are present.

There is no information on the number of atheists in the country.

There is no information on the number of foreign missionaries in the country, or whether proselytizing is restricted.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Government restricts freedom of religion. The country's leadership states publicly its preference for Islam. In an apparent effort to eliminate all alternative power bases, the regime has banned the once powerful Sanusiyya Islamic order. In its place, Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammr Al-Qadhafi established the Islamic Call Society (ICS), which is the Islamic arm of the Government's foreign policy and is active throughout the world. The ICS also is responsible for relations with other religions, including the Christian churches in the country. The ICS's main purpose is to promote a moderate form of Islam that reflects the religious views of the Government, and there are reports that Islamic groups whose beliefs and practices are at variance with the state-approved teaching of Islam are banned. In 1992 the Government announced that the ICS would be disbanded; however, its director still conducts activities, suggesting that the organization remains operational. Although most Islamic institutions are under government control, prominent families endow some mosques; however, the mosques generally remain within the government-approved interpretation of Islam.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government controls most mosques and Islamic institutions, and even mosques endowed by prominent families generally remain within the government-

approved interpretation of Islam. According to recent reports, individuals rarely are harassed because of their religious practices, unless such practices are perceived as having a political dimension or motivation.

Members of some minority religions are allowed to conduct services. Christian churches operate openly and are tolerated by the authorities; however, Christians are restricted by the lack of churches and there is a government limit of one church per denomination per city. The Government reportedly has failed to honor a promise made in 1970 to provide the Anglican Church with alternative facilities when it took the property used by the Church. Since 1988 the Anglicans have shared a villa with other Protestant denominations.

There are no known places of worship for other non-Muslim religions such as Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, and Buddhism, although adherents are allowed to practice within the privacy of their homes. Foreign adherents of these religions are allowed to display and sell religious items at bazaars and other gatherings.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In June 1998, at least 100 professionals in Benghazi and several other major cities were arrested on suspicion of political opposition activities, specifically support of or sympathy for the Libyan Islamic Group, an underground Islamic movement that is not known to have used or advocated violence. Some practicing Muslims have shaved their beards to avoid harassment from security services. Qadhafi has criticized publicly Libyan "mujaheddin" (generally, conservative Islamic activists who fought with the Afghan resistance movement against Soviet forces) as threats to the regime.

There continue to be reports of armed clashes between security forces and Islamic groups that oppose the current regime and advocate the establishment of a more traditional form of Islamic government.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Information on religious freedom is limited, although members of minority religions report that they do not face harassment by authorities or the Muslim majority on the basis of their religious practices.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States has no official presence in the country and maintains no bilateral dialog with the Government on religious freedom issues.

MOROCCO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and, although Islam is the official state religion, Jewish and Christian communities openly practice their faiths; however, the Government places certain restrictions on Christian religious materials and proselytizing, and several small religious minorities are tolerated with varying degrees of official restrictions. The Government monitors the activities of mosques and, places other restrictions on Muslims and Islamic organizations whose activities are deemed to have exceeded the bounds of religious practice and become political in nature.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Since July 23, 1999, when King Mohammed VI succeeded his father, the late King Hassan II, who ruled for 38 years, the new King has continued to uphold a tradition of respect for interfaith dialog.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, converts to Christianity sometimes face social ostracism.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 172,320 square miles and its population is approximately 30,122,350. Ninety-nine percent of citizens are Sunni

Muslims. The Jewish community numbers approximately 5,000 persons and predominantly resides in the Casablanca and Rabat urban areas, as well as some smaller cities throughout the country. The foreign Christian community (Roman Catholic and Protestant) consists of 5,000 practicing members, although estimates of Christians residing in the country at any particular time range up to 25,000. Most reside in the Casablanca and Rabat urban areas. Also located in Rabat and Casablanca, the Baha'i community numbers 350 to 400 persons. There is no information regarding the number of atheists in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides that Islam is the official religion, and designates the King as "Commander of the Faithful" with the responsibility of ensuring "respect for Islam." The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and Jewish and Christian communities openly practice their faiths; however, the Government places certain restrictions on Christian religious materials and proselytizing, and several small religious minorities are tolerated with varying degrees of official restrictions. A small foreign Hindu community has received the right to perform cremations and to hold services. Baha'is are forbidden to meet or participate in communal activities. The Government monitors the activities of mosques and places other restrictions on Muslims and Islamic organizations whose activities are deemed to have exceeded the bounds of religious practice and become political in nature.

The Government does not license or approve religions or religious organizations. The Government provides tax benefits, land and building grants, subsidies, and customs exemptions for imports necessary for the observance of the major religions.

The teaching of Islam in public schools benefits from discretionary funding in the Government's annual education budget, as do other curriculum subjects. The annual budget also provides funds for religious instruction to the parallel system of Jewish public schools. The Government has funded several efforts to study the cultural, artistic, literary, and scientific heritage of Moroccan Jews. In 1998 the Government created a chair for the study of comparative religions at the University of Rabat.

In August 2000, the King declared in a nationally televised speech that 100 mosques throughout the country would be used as teaching centers to fight illiteracy. In the first (and pilot) year of the announced program, 10,000 citizens between the ages of 15 and 45 were to receive literacy courses on Islam, civic education, and hygiene. If successful the program is expected to be expanded to include a larger part of the population in subsequent years. The King designated 200 unemployed university graduates to administer the literacy courses during the program's pilot stages, which began in September 2000.

The Government regularly organizes events and receives foreign religious delegations to encourage tolerance and respect among religions. In July 2000, at the Royal Palace in Tangiers, King Mohamed VI received two Jewish delegations from the Representative Jewish Council of Great Britain and Moroccan Jews residing in the United Kingdom. In September 2000, Royal Counselor Andre Azoulay, a leading Jewish citizen, represented King Mohamed VI at the New York opening of the 2-week exposition sponsored by the palace, entitled "Morocco: Jews and Art in the Muslim world."

Each May the Government organizes the annual "Fez Festival of Sacred Music," which includes musicians from many religions. In the past, the Government has organized numerous symposiums among local and international clergy, priests, rabbis, imams, and other spiritual leaders to examine ways to reduce religious intolerance and to promote interfaith dialog. Each year during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the King hosts colloquiums of Islamic religious scholars to examine ways to promote tolerance and mutual respect within Islam and between Islam and other religions. In July 2000, Royal Counselor Andre Azoulay delivered the opening speech in Seville, Spain, at the annual conference of the International Institute for Religious Dialog.

Also in July 2000, King Mohamed VI received a delegation from the Boston-based American nongovernmental organization (NGO) Middle East University, which was visiting to open its first summer university program in Morocco. The NGO eventually chose Rabat for its summer site, and opened its program to interested Moroccan university students. Visiting professors and experts from the United States and the Middle East, as well as academics from North African countries, participated in conferences, lectures, and courses during the program.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs monitors Friday mosque sermons and the Koranic schools to ensure the teaching of approved doctrine. At times the authorities suppress the activities of Islamists but generally tolerate activities limited to the propagation of Islam, education, and charity. Security forces commonly close mosques to the public shortly after Friday services to prevent use of the premises for unauthorized political activity. The Government strictly controls authorization to construct new mosques. Most mosques are constructed using private funds.

According to the press reports in late spring and summer 2000, the authorities allegedly blocked the publication of two newspapers associated with the Justice and Charity Organization (JCO)—*Al-Adl Wal Ihsane* and *Rissalat Al-Futuwa*—by ordering printers to suspend their distribution. According to press reports the Government continued to block the publication of the JCO's newspapers through the end of the period covered by this report, and in mid-April 2001, seized thousands of copies of the JCO's weekly youth organization newspaper, *Rissalat Al-Futuwa*. Two of the JCO's websites also were blocked by the authorities at the same time, with domestic access to them cut off. The head of the Paris-based NGO, *Journalists Without Borders* sent a protest letter, also in April 2001, to Minister of Interior Midaoui, criticizing the Government's actions. In May 2001, the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights issued a similar communique expressing its concern over the banning of JCO newspapers.

Islamic law and tradition call for punishment of any Muslim who converts to another faith. Citizens who convert to Christianity and other religions sometimes face social ostracism, and in the past a small number of persons have faced short periods of questioning or detention by the authorities. Voluntary conversion is not a crime under the Criminal or Civil Codes; however, in the past the authorities have jailed some converts on the basis of references to Koranic law.

Any attempt to induce a Muslim to convert is illegal. (According to Article 220 of the Penal Code, any attempt to stop one or more persons from the exercise of their religious beliefs, or attendance at religious services, is unlawful and may be punished by 3 to 6 months' imprisonment and a fine of \$10–\$50 (115–575 dirhams). The Article applies the same penalty to “anyone who employs incitements in order to shake the faith of a Muslim or to convert him to another religion.”) Foreign missionaries either limit their proselytizing to non-Muslims or conduct their work quietly. The Government cited the prohibition on conversion in the Penal Code in most cases in which courts expelled foreign missionaries.

During the period covered by this report, there were no known cases of foreigners being denied entry into the country because they were carrying Christian materials, as had occurred in 1998 and the first half of 1999.

Since the time of the French Protectorate (1912–1956), a small foreign Christian community has opened churches, orphanages, hospitals, and schools without any restriction or licensing requirement being imposed. Missionaries who conduct themselves in accordance with societal expectations largely are left unhindered. Those whose activities become public face expulsion.

The Government permits the display and sale of Bibles in French, English, and Spanish, but confiscates Arabic-language Bibles and refuses licenses for their importation and sale, despite the absence of any law banning such books. Nevertheless, Arabic Bibles reportedly have been sold in local bookstores.

The small Baha'i community has been forbidden to meet or participate in communal activities since 1983. However, during the period covered by this report, no members of the Baha'i community were reported to have been summoned to the Ministry of the Interior for questioning concerning their faith or for meeting, as had occurred in past years. For the third year in a row, there were no reports of Baha'is being denied passports because of their religion.

There are two sets of laws and courts—one for Jews and one for Muslims—pertaining to marriage, inheritance, and family matters. The family law courts are run, depending on the law that applies, by rabbinical and Islamic authorities who are court officials. Parliament authorizes any changes to those laws. Non-Koranic sections of Muslim law on personal status are applied to non-Muslim and non-Jewish persons. Alternatively, non-Muslim and non-Jewish foreigners in the country may refer to their embassies or consulates for marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other personal issues if they choose not to adhere to Moroccan law.

Women suffer various forms of legal and cultural discrimination, in part because of the codification of Islamic tenets in criminal and civil law. The civil-law status of women is governed by the Code of Personal Status (sometimes referred to as the “*Moudouwana*”), which is based on the Maliki school of Islamic law. Although the Code of Personal Status was reformed in 1993, women's groups still complain of unequal treatment, particularly under the laws governing marriage, divorce, and in-

heritance. To marry, a woman generally is required to obtain the permission of her “tuteur,” or legal guardian, usually her father. Only in rare circumstances may she act as her own “tuteur.” It is far easier for a man to divorce his wife than for a woman to divorce her husband. Under Islamic law and tradition, rather than asking for a divorce, a man simply may repudiate his wife outside of court. Under the 1993 reforms to the Code of Personal Status, a woman’s presence in court is required for her husband to divorce her, although women’s groups report that this law frequently is ignored. However, human rights activists reported that in one NGO-sponsored test in the late 1990’s, officials refused to order a divorce without the wife being present, despite offers of bribes. Nevertheless, women’s groups complain that men resort to ruses to evade the new legal restrictions. The divorce may be finalized even over the woman’s objections, although in such cases the court grants her unspecified allowance rights.

A woman seeking a divorce has few practical alternatives. She may offer her husband money to agree to a divorce (known as a *khol’a* divorce). The husband must agree to the divorce and is allowed to specify the amount to be paid, without limit. According to women’s groups, many men pressure their wives to pursue this kind of divorce. A woman also may file for a judicial divorce if her husband takes a second wife, if he abandons her, or if he physically abuses her; however, divorce procedures in these cases are lengthy and complicated. In November 1998, the Minister of Islamic Affairs proposed the institutionalization of additions to the basic marriage contract that would outline the rights and duties agreed upon between husband and wife and permit legal recourse for the enforcement of the contract.

Under the Criminal Code, women generally are accorded the same treatment as men, but this is not the case for family and estate law, which is based on the Code of Personal Status. Under the Code of Personal Status, women inherit only half as much as male heirs. Moreover, even in cases in which the law provides for equal status, cultural norms often prevent a woman from exercising those rights. For example, when a woman inherits property, male relatives may pressure her to relinquish her interest.

The Government and the King continued to promote their proposal to reform the Personal Status Code to advance women’s rights. Islamists and some other traditional segments of society firmly opposed the proposal, especially with respect to its more controversial elements, such as reform of women’s legal status in marriage and family law issues.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

After 11 years of house arrest for refusing to acknowledge the religious authority of the King, Islamist dissident Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine was allowed to leave his Sale home in May 2000. Subsequent to the lifting of his house arrest, Sheikh Yassine began receiving at his home leading members of his organization, the JCO, attending mosque prayer services, and speaking before representatives of the national and foreign press corps. Yassine’s books, articles, and audiocassettes were sold at some bookstores, and editorials that had called for his release were published without impediment.

On December 10, 2000—International Human Rights Day—security forces around the country arrested hundreds of JCO activists conducting sit-ins in eight of Morocco’s largest cities to protest human rights abuses and operational obstacles imposed on their organization by the authorities. Many of those arrested, including multiple members of Sheikh Yassine’s immediate family, later were released; however more than 100 were charged, and many of their trials still were ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report. Over half of those charged were prosecuted and sentenced to suspended prison sentences and fines by the end of the period covered by this report. Some of those charged received 1-year prison sentences for participating in an unauthorized demonstration, illegal gathering in public, and possessing dangerous objects. The OMDH also expressed in its May communique its concern about the arrest and trials of the JCO members.

The JCO has an active presence on university campuses and occasionally had organized protests of Yassine’s house arrest prior to his release. In November 2000, security forces violently clashed with JCO students at Mohammedia University (in the Casablanca suburbs) as the JCO prepared for annual student elections. According to news reports, security forces injured more than 100 students and arrested 14. Police claimed that they responded because the students illegally remained on campus overnight and committed acts of vandalism. The students were sentenced to 2 years’ imprisonment and fines ranging from \$50 to \$150 (575 to 1,725 dirhams). Other reports indicated that similar although less violent clashes occurred between security forces and JCO students at other university campuses around the country engaged in student elections.

In November 2000, security forces in Agadir (in the south) forcibly broke up a sit-in demonstration by an Islamist trade union that was striking for better working conditions in a cannery. The violent actions allegedly led to one death, and eight persons were seriously injured.

Prominent members of the JCO are subject to constant surveillance and sometimes are unable to obtain passports and other necessary documents. During the summer of 2000, the Government prevented members of the JCO from gaining access to campgrounds and beaches for group prayer sessions, and arrested and jailed some of the group's members. In August 2000, two JCO members were sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment for their proselytizing activities on a beach in El-Jadida. During the same month, Interior Minister Ahmed Midaoui declared before Parliament that "we are one sole nation and nobody can impose upon others their own vision of Islam," and that "people go to beaches for recreational purposes and we do not have Islamic beaches." He also added that "we cannot tolerate the appearance of sectarianism in our society."

In 2000 the Gendarmerie Royale summoned several members of the foreign Christian community for questioning concerning the practice of their faith. The Gendarmerie began an investigation into their activities at that time. The investigation reportedly still was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report. Despite not possessing a resident visa, the subjects of the investigation continued to face no problem residing in, exiting, and returning to the country.

In the past, the Ministry of Interior claimed that there were 55 Islamists serving sentences for offenses that ranged from arms smuggling in the 1980's to participation in a bomb attack on a hotel in Marrakech in 1994. In the past, there also were claims that some of these Islamists were imprisoned solely for calling for an Islamic state during the 1980's. The AMDH claims that 2 members of the "Group of 26," an Islamist group involved in smuggling arms into the country from Algeria in the mid-1980's, remain in prison. The other 24 members completed their sentences or otherwise were released at various times between 1994 and the end of the year.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Foreigners attend religious services without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, and Jews live throughout the Kingdom in safety. While free expression of Islamic faith and even the free academic and theological discussion of non-Islamic religions are accepted on television and radio, public efforts to proselytize are discouraged by society. Most citizens view such public acts as provocative threats to law and order in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. In addition, society expects public respect for the institutions and mores of Islam, although private behavior and beliefs are unregulated and unmonitored. Because many Muslims view the Baha'i Faith as a heretical offshoot of Islam, most members of the tiny Baha'i community maintain a low religious profile; however, Baha'is live freely and without fear for their persons or property, and some even hold government jobs.

Because the populace is overwhelmingly Muslim, because Islam is the religion of the State, and because the King enjoys temporal and spiritual authority through his role as "Commander of the Faithful," there is widespread consensus among Muslims about religious practices and interpretation. Other sources of popular consensus are the councils of ulemas, unofficial religious scholars who serve as monitors of the monarchy and the actions of the Government. Because the ulemas traditionally hold the power to legitimize or delegitimize kings through their moral authority, government policies closely adhere to popular and religious expectations. While dissenters such as Sheikh Yassine and his followers challenge the religious authority of the King and call for the establishment of a government more deeply rooted in their vision of Islam, the majority of citizens do not appear to share their views.

In mid-October 2000, two Moroccan youths attempted to vandalize a synagogue in Tangiers following the outbreak of Israeli-Arab violence in the Middle East. King Mohamed VI publicly declared in a televised speech on November 6, 2000 that the government would not tolerate mistreatment of Morocco's Jews. A Tangiers court sentenced the two youths to 1 year in prison.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

During the period covered by this report, U.S. Embassy officers continued to raise religious freedom issues in an effort to help resolve the few outstanding cases of restrictions on religious freedom. Prior to the release of Sheikh Yassine, the Embassy discussed his house arrest with government interlocutors, Sheikh Yassine's lawyer, his family, and some of his associates. Similarly, embassy officers sought openly to meet directly with Sheikh Yassine prior to his release and were informed by credible sources that "as a matter of principle" he would not meet with either journalists or diplomats. Prior to and after Yassine's release, embassy officers who sought to meet with Sheikh Yassine, members of his family, and his close associates encountered no interference from the Government in seeking these contacts.

U.S. Embassy officials also meet regularly with religious officials, including the Minister of Islamic Affairs, Islamic religious scholars, the leader of the Jewish community, and local Christian leaders and missionaries. The Embassy maintains contacts with the small Baha'i community as well.

WESTERN SAHARA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; due to continuing Moroccan administrative control of the territory of the Western Sahara, the laws and restrictions regarding religious organizations and religious freedom are similar to those found in the Kingdom of Morocco.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The territory has a total area of approximately 102,706 square miles and its population is approximately 245,000. The overwhelming majority of the population is Sunni Muslim.

There is a tiny foreign community working for the United Nations Interposition Force in the territory (known by its French acronym, MINURSO).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; due to continuing Moroccan administrative control of the territory of the Western Sahara, the laws and restrictions regarding religious organizations and religious freedom are similar to those found in the kingdom of Morocco.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Restrictions on religious freedom in the Western Sahara are similar to those found in Morocco.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 authorities' refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Morocco discusses religious freedom issues in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights in the Western Sahara.

OMAN

Islam is the state religion, and the Basic Charter preserves the freedom to practice religious rites, in accordance with tradition, provided that it does not breach public order. The Basic Charter also provides that Shari'a (Islamic Law) is the basis for legislation. The Government permits worship for non-Muslim residents; however, non-Muslim religious organizations must be registered with the Government, and the Government restricts some of their activities.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Christian and Hindu worship is permitted, and Sultan Qaboos has given land for the construction of centers of worship for these religions. It is illegal to proselytize Muslims to abandon Islam.

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

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total land area is 79,035 square miles, and its population is approximately 2,553,000. Most citizens are Ibadhi or Sunni Muslims, but there also is a minority of Shi'a Muslims. There are about 527,000 Sunni Muslims. There is a small community of ethnically Indian Hindu citizens and reportedly a very small number of Christian citizens, who originally were originally India or the Levant and who have been naturalized.

The majority of non-Muslims are noncitizen immigrant workers from South Asia. There are many Christian denominations in Muscat.

There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country.

There is no information regarding missionary groups. The Government prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Islam is the state religion, which is affirmed by the 1996 Basic Charter. The 1996 Basic Charter provides that Shari'a is the basis for legislation and preserves the freedom to practice religious rites, in accordance with tradition, provided that it does not breach public order. The Charter also provides that discrimination against individuals on the basis of religion or religious group is prohibited; however, decrees implementing the prohibition against religious discrimination have not yet been established. The Government permits freedom of worship for non-Muslims as well. Some non-Muslims worship at churches and temples built on land donated by the Sultan, including two Catholic and two Protestant churches. Hindu temples also have been built on government-provided land. The Government also provided land for Catholic and Protestant missions in Sohar and Salalah. However, non-Muslim religious organizations must be registered with the Government, and the Government restricts some of their activities.

The Government has sponsored forums at which differing interpretations of Islam have been examined; there are no known instances during the period covered by this report in which the Government has publicly promoted interfaith dialog.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Citizens and noncitizen residents are free to discuss their religious beliefs; however, the Government prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims. Under Islamic law, a Muslim who recants belief in Islam would be considered an apostate and dealt with under applicable Islamic legal procedure. Non-Muslims are permitted to change their religious affiliation to Islam. The authorities reportedly have asked members of the Baha'i community not to proselytize, in accordance with the country's law and custom.

The Government prohibits non-Muslim groups from publishing religious material, although material printed abroad may be brought into the country. Members of all religions and religious groups are free to maintain links with coreligionists abroad and undertake foreign travel for religious purposes. Ministers and priests from abroad also are permitted to visit the country for the purpose of carrying out duties related to registered religious organizations.

The police monitor mosque sermons to ensure that the preachers do not discuss political topics and stay within the state-approved orthodoxy of Islam. The Govern-

ment expects all imams to preach sermons within the parameters of standardized texts distributed monthly by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

Citizen children must attend a school that provides instruction in Islam; non-citizen children may attend schools that do not offer instruction in Islam.

Some aspects of Islamic law and tradition as interpreted in the country discriminate against women. Shari'a favors male heirs in adjudicating inheritance claims. Many women are reluctant to take an inheritance dispute to court for fear of alienating the family.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Religious discrimination in the private sector largely is absent. In the past, some members of the Shi'a minority claimed that they faced discrimination in employment and educational opportunities.

Christian theologians have met with local Islamic authorities and with members of the faculty at the country's major university. Private groups that promote interfaith dialog are permitted to exist as long as discussions do not constitute an attempt to cause Muslims to recant their Islamic beliefs.

In May 2001, the Sultan invited Islamic leaders from many countries and all major branches and schools of Islam to the opening of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Members of the staff at the U.S. Embassy routinely participate in local religious ceremonies and have contact with non-Muslim practitioners.

QATAR

The Constitution provides no explicit protection for freedom of religion and the Government continues to prohibit public worship by non-Muslims; however, it does permit private worship for "peoples of the book," (i.e., Christians and Jews). The official state religion follows the conservative Wahhabi tradition of the Hanbali school of Islam.

During the period covered by this report, the Government took substantive steps to improve religious freedom somewhat by continuing to recognize officially some Christian congregations and by proceeding with plans to construct Christian churches in the capital, Doha. Non-Muslims may not proselytize, and the Government formally prohibits the publication, importation, and distribution of non-Islamic religious books and materials. However, in practice, individuals generally are not prevented from importing Bibles and other religious items for personal use. At times government practices may have the effect of discriminating along religious lines. For example, all government positions of authority are reserved for citizens, which effectively limits those positions to Muslims. Also, Shi'a Muslims, with close family and sectarian ties to other countries in the region, effectively are barred from employment in certain sensitive areas involving state security.

There are generally amicable relations among persons of differing religious beliefs; however, many Muslims oppose the construction of permanent Christian churches.

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Ambassador and embassy officials meet regularly with government officials to discuss issues of religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 4,254 square miles and its population is estimated at more than 650,000 persons, of whom approximately

170,000 are believed to be citizens. The majority of the 480,000 non-citizens are Sunni Muslims mostly from other Arab countries working on temporary employment contracts, and their accompanying family members. The remaining foreigners include Shi'a Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Baha'is.

The Christian community is a diverse mix of Indians, Filipinos, Europeans, Arabs, and Americans. It includes Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and other Protestant denominations. The Hindu community is almost exclusively Indian, while Buddhists include South and East Asians. Most Baha'is come from Iran. Both citizens and foreigners attend a small number of Shi'a mosques. There is no information regarding the number of atheists in the country.

No foreign missionary groups operate openly in the country.

Most foreign workers and their families live near the major employment centers in and around the city of Doha, although a growing number now live near the natural gas projects located in the northern part of the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

There is no constitutional protection for freedom of religion, and the Government officially prohibits public worship by non-Muslims; however, it does permit and protect private religious services that have received prior authorization. The state religion is Islam, as interpreted by the conservative Wahhabi order of the Sunni branch. While Shi'a Muslims practice most aspects of their faith freely, they do not organize traditional Shi'a ceremonies or perform rites such as self-flagellation.

The Government and ruling family are linked inextricably to Islam. The Minister of Islamic Affairs controls the construction of mosques, the administration of clerical affairs, and Islamic education. The Emir participates in public prayers during both Eid holiday periods, and personally finances the Hajj journeys of poor pilgrims who cannot afford to travel to Mecca.

The Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches received de facto official recognition in the latter part of 1999, when the Government made a verbal commitment to allow the churches to operate without interference. The Government has respected this commitment in practice, but it has not granted these churches formal recognition by the end of the period covered by this report. The Government does not recognize any other religions, officially or unofficially. It does not maintain an official approved register of religious congregations.

The Government officially celebrates Eid Al-Fitr, following the holy month of Ramadan, and the Eid Al-Adha, which commemorates Abraham's sacrifice, as well as the country's independence day.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican churches operate openly, and the Anglican Church, with its ties to preindependence British influence, has bank accounts in its name. However, the lack of formal government recognition limits their ability to obtain trade licenses, sponsor clergy, or, for Catholic and Orthodox churches, the ability to open bank accounts in the name of the church.

Non-Muslims may not proselytize, and the Government officially prohibits public worship by non-Muslims. However, it does permit and protect private services. Converting from Islam is considered apostasy, and is technically a capital offense; however, there is no record of an execution for such a crime since 1971.

Non-Muslim religious services must be authorized in advance by the Government. Although traffic police may direct cars at these services, the congregations may not publicly advertise them in advance or use visible religious symbols such as outdoor crosses. Some services, particularly those on Easter and Christmas, can draw more than 1,300 worshippers.

The Government does not permit Hindus, Buddhists, or other polytheistic religions to operate as freely as Christian congregations. (The Koran does not specifically enjoin toleration for such religions.) However, there is no official effort to harass or hamper adherents of these faiths in the private practice or their religion.

Discrimination in the areas of employment, education, housing, and health services do occur, but nationality is usually a more important determinant than religion. For example, Muslims hold nearly all high-ranking government positions because they are reserved for citizens. On the other hand, Shi'a Muslims generally are restricted from employment in areas deemed critical to national security.

Non-citizens, including both Muslims and non-Muslims, do not receive the same benefits as citizens. They must pay for health care, electricity, water, and education (services that are provided free of charge to citizens), and they are not permitted to own property.

The Government formally prohibits the publication, importation, and distribution of non-Islamic religious literature; however, in practice individuals generally are not prevented from importing Bibles and other religious items for personal use. In previous years, there were sporadic reports of confiscation of such materials by customs officials; however, during the period covered by this report, Christian worship groups reported having no trouble importing religious instructional materials (i.e., Sunday school materials and devotionals) for their use. In addition, religious materials for use at Christmas and Easter now are available readily in local shops.

Islamic instruction is compulsory in public schools. While there are no restrictions on non-Muslims providing private religious instruction for children, most foreign children attend secular private schools.

Muslims may enjoy some advantages in legal proceedings. For example, Muslim litigants may request the Shari'a courts to assume jurisdiction in commercial or civil cases; non-Muslims are restricted to civil courts. Also, Muslim criminals may have their sentences reduced by memorizing the Koran.

The legal system follows Shari'a law in matters of inheritance and child custody. Muslims have the automatic right to inherit from their spouses; however non-Muslim spouses (invariably wives, since Muslim women cannot legally marry non-Muslims) do not inherit unless their spouse formally wills them a portion (up to one third of the total) of their estates. In cases of divorce, young children usually remain with the mother, whatever her religion. However, the Government will not allow noncitizen parents, even if they have custody of their children, to take them out of the country without the permission of the citizen parent, which effectively discriminates against non-Muslim parents.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The overall trend during the period covered by this report was toward somewhat more religious freedom for Christian worship. Private conversations between the Government and the ambassadors of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Romania, and South Korea have encouraged the Government to maintain this atmosphere.

During the period covered by this report, the Catholic Church developed plans and raised funds to begin construction of a church. The church building is to be located on a portion of the site reserved by the Government for the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox communities. However, fundraising problems have delayed the other congregations in completing their plans. The Government has voiced concerns that a rapid pace of progress may provoke opposition among more conservative citizens.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between persons of differing religious beliefs generally are amicable and tolerant; however, a sizable percentage of the citizen population opposes the construction of permanent Christian churches.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officers regularly meet with government officials, both publicly and privately, to address religious freedom issues. Such matters have been raised with the Emir (the Chief of State), the Foreign Minister, and several other government officials. To increase the impact, the U.S. Embassy coordinates these discussions with the embassies of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Romania, and South Korea.

U.S. Embassy officers have taken the lead in bringing government officials and lay church leaders together to discuss toleration and understanding of non-Islamic worship. The Government has been receptive to quiet dialog, as evidenced by its offer to donate land for, and assist in, the construction of Christian churches.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic monarchy without legal protection for freedom of religion, and such protection does not exist in practice. Islam is the official religion, and

all citizens are Muslims. Based on its interpretation of the hadith, or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, the Government prohibits the public practice of non-Muslim religions. The Government recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private; however, the distinction between public and private worship is not clearly defined, and at times the Government does not respect in practice the right to private worship.

There generally was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, the number of arrests for public worship of other religions decreased compared with the previous period. Freedom of non-Muslims to worship privately has received increasing attention and respect in recent years through published interviews with government officials and press articles that addressed the subject in the context of human rights; however, the right to private worship still is restricted. The Government has stated publicly that its policy is to protect the right of non-Muslims to worship privately; however, it does not provide explicit guidelines for determining what constitutes private worship, which makes distinctions between public and private worship unclear. Such lack of clarity, as well as instances of arbitrary enforcement by the authorities, force most non-Muslims to worship in such a manner as to avoid discovery by the Government or others.

Members of the Shi'a minority continued to face institutionalized political and economic discrimination, including restrictions on the practice of their faith. However, the Government lifted the requirement that Shi'a obtain advance permission to travel to Iran, thus effectively allowing them to visit religious sites in Iran without prior notice.

The overwhelming majority of citizens support an Islamic state and oppose public non-Muslim worship. There is societal discrimination against adherents of the Shi'a minority.

Senior U.S. government officials and members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom raised the issue of religious freedom with the Government on numerous occasions during the period covered by this report.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total land area is 5,273,965 square miles and its population is 15 million. There are approximately 14 million Sunni Muslims in the country. Approximately 1 million citizens are Shi'a Muslims, who live mostly in the eastern province, where they constitute approximately one-third of the population.

Seven million foreigners also reside in the country, including approximately 1.5 million Indians, 900,000 Bangladeshis, 800,000 Egyptians, nearly 800,000 Pakistanis, 600,000 Filipinos, 130,000 Sri Lankans, and 36,000 Americans. Comprehensive statistics for the denominations of foreigners are not available, but they include Muslims from the various branches of Islam, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jews. For example, the Embassy of the Philippines reports that over 90 percent of the Filipino community (or over half a million persons) is Christian. The Embassy of India reports that the Indian community includes Muslims and Hindus, as well as Christians and Buddhists. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops estimates there are well more than 500,000 Catholics in the country, and perhaps as many as 1 million. There is no information regarding the number of atheists in the country.

There is no information regarding whether there are foreign missionaries in the country. Proselytizing is not permitted.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Freedom of religion does not exist. Islam is the official religion, and all citizens must be Muslims. The Government prohibits the public practice of other religions. The Government recognizes the right of private worship by non-Muslims; however, it does not always respect this right in practice. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic monarchy and the Government has declared the Holy Koran and the Sunna (tradition) of the Prophet Muhammad to be the country's Constitution. The Government bases its legitimacy on governance according to the precepts of the rigorously conservative and strict interpretation of the Hanbali school of the Sunni branch of Islam and discriminates against other branches of Islam. Neither the Government nor society in general accepts the concepts of separation of religion and state, and such separation does not exist.

The legal system is based on Shari'a (Islamic law), with Shari'a courts basing their judgments largely on a code derived from the Holy Koran and the Sunna. The

Government permits Shi'a Muslims to use their own legal tradition to adjudicate noncriminal cases within their community.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Islamic practice generally is limited to that of the Wahhabi order, which adheres to the Hanbali school of the Sunni branch of Islam as interpreted by Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab, an 18th century Arab religious reformer. Practices contrary to this interpretation, such as visits to the tombs of renowned Muslims, are discouraged, as is the practice of other schools of Sunni Islam. The spreading of Muslim teachings not in conformance with the officially accepted interpretation of Islam is prohibited. Writers and other individuals who publicly criticize this interpretation, including both those who advocate a stricter interpretation and those who favor a more moderate interpretation than the Government's, reportedly have been imprisoned and faced other reprisals, although there were no reports of such actions during the period covered by this report.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs supervises and finances the construction and maintenance of almost all mosques in the country. The Ministry pays the salaries of imams (prayer leaders) and others who work in the mosques. A governmental committee defines the qualifications of imams. The Mutawwa'in (religious police, who make up the Committee to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice) are government employees, and the president of the Mutawwa'in holds the rank of cabinet minister.

Foreign imams are barred from leading worship during the most heavily attended prayer times and prohibited from delivering sermons during Friday congregational prayers. The Government states that its actions are part of its "Saudiization" plan to replace foreign workers with citizens.

Under Shari'a conversion by a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy, a crime punishable by death if the accused does not recant. There were no executions for apostasy during the period covered by this report, and no reports of any such executions for the past several years.

The Government prohibits public non-Muslim religious activities. Non-Muslim worshippers risk arrest, lashing, and deportation for engaging in overt religious activity that attracts official attention. The Government has stated publicly, including before the U.N. Committee on Human Rights in Geneva, that its policy is to protect the right of non-Muslims to worship privately; however, it does not provide explicit guidelines—such as the number of persons permitted to attend and acceptable locations—for determining what constitutes private worship, which makes distinctions between public and private worship unclear. Such lack of clarity, as well as instances of arbitrary enforcement by the authorities, force most non-Muslims to worship in such a manner as to avoid discovery by the Government or others. During the period covered by this report, the number of reports of detentions and deportations related to non-Muslim worship has decreased compared to the previous period, and there were no reports of lashings.

The Government does not permit non-Muslim clergy to enter the country for the purpose of conducting religious services, although some come under other auspices. Such restrictions make it very difficult for most non-Muslims to maintain contact with clergymen and attend services. Catholics and Orthodox Christians, who require a priest on a regular basis to receive the sacraments required by their faith, particularly are affected.

Proselytizing by non-Muslims, including the distribution of non-Muslim religious materials such as Bibles, is illegal. There were no reports during the period covered by this report of arrests for proselytizing. Muslims or non-Muslims wearing religious symbols of any kind in public risk confrontation with the Mutawwa'in. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, approximately 50 so-called "Call and Guidance" centers employing approximately 500 persons work to convert foreigners to Islam. Some non-Muslim foreigners convert to Islam during their stay in the country, including more than 200 persons in Jeddah each year. The press often carries articles about such conversions, including testimonials.

The Government requires noncitizens to carry Iqamas, or legal resident identity cards, which contain a religious designation for "Muslim" or "non-Muslim."

Members of the Shi'a minority are the subjects of officially sanctioned political and economic discrimination. The authorities permit the celebration of the Shi'a holiday of Ashura in the eastern province city of Qatif, provided that the celebrants do not undertake large, public marches or engage in self-flagellation (a traditional Shi'a practice). The celebrations are monitored by the police; however, police presence at the April 2001 Ashura celebrations reportedly was much less prominent than in previous years. No other Ashura celebrations are permitted in the country, and many Shi'a travel to Qatif or to Bahrain to participate in Ashura celebrations.

The Government continued to enforce other restrictions on the Shi'a community, such as banning Shi'a books.

Shi'a have declined government offers to build state-supported mosques because they fear the Government would prohibit the incorporation and display of Shi'a motifs in any such mosques. The Government seldom permits private construction of Shi'a mosques. In March 2001, religious police reportedly closed a Shi'a mosque in Hofuf because it had been built without government permission.

Members of the Shi'a minority are discriminated against in government employment, especially with respect to positions that relate to national security, such as in the military or in the Ministry of the Interior. The Government restricts employment of Shi'a in the oil and petrochemical industries. The Government also discriminates against Shi'a in higher education through unofficial restrictions on the number of Shi'a admitted to universities.

Since the 1979 Iranian revolution some Shi'a suspected of subversion have been subjected periodically to surveillance and limitations on travel abroad. Prior to 2001, the Government actively discouraged Shi'a travel to Iran to visit pilgrimage sites due to security concerns. Shi'a who went to Iran without government permission, or who were suspected of such travel, normally had their passports confiscated upon their return for periods of up to 2 years. However, according to press reports, in early 2001, the Government lifted the requirement that citizens intending to travel to Iran seek permission in advance from authorities. This change corresponds with improving relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Advance permission for travel to Iraq, whether for business or religious pilgrimage, has been necessary for some time due to security concerns, but such travel remains possible.

Under the Hanbali interpretation of Shari'a law, judges may discount the testimony of people who are not practicing Muslims or who do not have the correct faith. Legal sources report that testimony by Shi'a is often ignored in courts of law or is deemed to have less weight than testimony by Sunnis. For example, in May 2001, a judge in the eastern province asked two witnesses to an automobile accident if they were Shi'a. When they so confirmed, the judge announced to the court that their testimony was inadmissible. Sentencing under the legal system is not uniform. Laws and regulations state that defendants should be treated equally; however, under Shari'a as interpreted and applied in the country, crimes against Muslims may result in harsher penalties than those against non-Muslims.

Customs officials routinely open mail and shipments to search for contraband, including non-Muslim materials, such as Bibles and religious videotapes. Individuals generally are able to bring religious materials into the country for personal use.

Islamic religious education is mandatory in public schools at all levels. All children receive religious instruction, which generally is limited to that of the Hanbali school of Islam. Non-Muslim students in private schools are not required to study Islam.

Women are subject to discrimination under Shari'a as interpreted in the country. In a Shari'a court, a woman's testimony does not carry the same weight as that of a man: The testimony of one man equals that of two women. Female parties to court proceedings, such as divorce and other family law cases, generally must deputize male relatives to speak on their behalf.

Although Islamic law permits polygyny, with up to four wives, it is becoming less common due to demographic and economic changes. Islamic law enjoins a man to treat each wife equally. In practice such equality is left to the discretion of the husband. Some women participate in Al-Mesyar (or "short daytime visit") marriages, in which the women relinquish their legal rights to financial support and nighttime cohabitation. In addition, the husband is not required to inform his other wives of the marriage, and any children resulting from such a marriage have no inheritance rights. Women may not marry noncitizens without government permission; men must obtain approval from the Ministry of Interior to marry women from countries outside the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In accordance with Shari'a, women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims; men may marry Christians and Jews, as well as Muslims.

While Shari'a provides women with a basis to own and dispose of property independently, women often are constrained from asserting such rights because of various legal and societal barriers, especially regarding employment and freedom of movement. In addition, daughters receive half the inheritance awarded to their brothers.

Women must demonstrate legally specified grounds for divorce, but men may divorce without cause. In doing so, men are required to pay immediately an amount of money agreed upon at the time of the marriage, which serves as a one-time alimony payment. Women who demonstrate legal grounds for divorce still are entitled to this alimony. If divorced or widowed, a Muslim woman normally may keep her

children until they attain a specified age: 7 years for boys, 9 years for girls. Children over these ages are awarded to the former husband or the deceased husband's family. Numerous divorced foreign women continued to be prevented by their former husbands from visiting their children after divorce.

Failure of Muslim women to wear an abaya or headscarf can lead to admonishment (and in the past occasionally has led to arrest) by some Mutawwa'in enforcing their own interpretation of religious doctrine.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to commit abuses of religious freedom. Information about government practices is incomplete because judicial proceedings are closed to the public and the Government restricts freedom of speech and association. In addition, the media exercises self-censorship regarding sensitive issues such as religious freedom, there are no independent non-governmental organizations that monitor religious freedom, and the Government does not issue visas to foreign human rights organizations to conduct independent investigations. Thus, reports of abuses often are difficult or impossible to corroborate.

The Government continued to commit abuses against members of the Shi'a minority. Since beginning the investigation of the 1996 bombing of the U.S. military installation at Al-Khobar, in which a number of eastern province Shi'a were arrested, authorities have detained, interrogated, and confiscated the passports of a number of Shi'a Muslims. The Government reportedly continued to detain an unknown number of Shi'a who were arrested in the aftermath of the Al-Khobar bombing. Government security forces reportedly arrest Shi'a based on the smallest suspicion, hold them in custody for lengthy periods, and then release them without explanation.

According to various reports, a number of Shi'a sheikhs (religious leaders) were arrested and detained during the period covered by this report. Amnesty International (AI) reported that Sheikh Ali bin Ali al-Ghanim was arrested in August 2000 at the border with Jordan and held by the Mabahith, the national investigative bureau that is part of the Ministry of Interior. In March 2001, Mabahith officers reportedly arrested and detained Sheikh Mohammed Al Amri in Medina.

Early in 2000, a Shi'a sheikh was taken into custody and three other sheikhs were arrested for unknown reasons near the border with Jordan. Human Rights Watch reported that at least seven additional Shi'a religious leaders reportedly remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report for violating restrictions on Shi'a religious practices. According to AI, Hashim Al-Sayyid Al-Sada, a Shi'a cleric suspected of political or religious dissent, was arrested in his home in April 2000 and reportedly remained held incommunicado at the end of the period covered by this report.

The Government continued to detain non-Muslims engaged in worship services, although at times it was unclear whether the services constituted public or private worship. For example, on November 30, 2000, police broke up a gathering of 60 Christians worshipping in a rented building and detained 5 of the worshipers for approximately 1 hour for questioning. In December 2000, authorities broke up a private Christian worship service of 12 Filipino citizens, arrested 6 of the Filipinos, and detained 3 of those arrested for nearly 2 months. On April 20, a Filipino Christian man reportedly was stopped at a routine police checkpoint while driving a woman from a Christian service. After discovering religious materials in the car, the police detained the man for 2 days.

In August 2000, authorities released a Christian Indian national who had been arrested in June 2000 for possession of a videotape of a religious event. According to the Indian Embassy, the man spent approximately 2 months in jail and was released pending deportation on charges of violating the labor law. There were reports during the period covered by this report that authorities interrogated members of the tiny Baha'i community regarding the size and status of their community, although there were no reports of any additional actions taken against them.

In April 2000, in the city of Najran, in the southwest region bordering Yemen, rioting by members of the Makarama Ismaili Shi'a eventually led to an attack by an armed group of Shi'a on a hotel that contained an office of the regional governor. Security forces responded, leading to extended gun battles between the two sides. Some press reports indicated that the rioting followed the arrest of a Makarama Ismaili Shi'a imam and some of his followers on charges of "sorcery." Various other reports attributed the unrest to the closure of two Ismaili Shi'a mosques and the provincial governor's refusal to permit Ismailis to hold public observances of the Shi'a holiday of Ashura. Still other reports attributed the unrest to a local crackdown on smuggling and resultant tribal discontent. Officials at the highest level of the Government stated that the unrest in Najran was not the result of Shi'a-Sunni

tension or religious discrimination. After the unrest ended the Government stated that 5 members of the security forces were killed, and Ismaili leaders claimed that as many as 40 Ismaili tribesmen were killed. There was no independent confirmation of these claims. In October 2000, AI reported that two Ismaili Shi'a teachers, who were arrested in April 2000 following the unrest, were convicted on charges of sorcery and sentenced to 1,500 lashes; however, this report could not be confirmed.

Magic is widely believed in and sometimes practiced, often in the form of fortune-telling and swindles; however, under Shari'a, the practice of magic is regarded as the worst form of polytheism, an offense for which no repentance is accepted and which is punishable by death. There are an unknown number of detainees held in prison on the charge of "sorcery," including the practice of "black magic" or "witchcraft." In a few cases, self-proclaimed "miracle workers" have been executed for sorcery involving physical harm or apostasy.

Mutawwa'in practices and incidents of abuse varied widely in different regions of the country. While reports of incidents were most numerous in the central Nejd region, which includes the capital Riyadh, reports of incidents in the eastern province increased during the period covered by this report. In certain areas, both the Mutawwa'in and religious vigilantes acting on their own harassed, assaulted, battered, arrested, and detained citizens and foreigners. The Government requires the Mutawwa'in to follow established procedures and to offer instruction in a polite manner; however, Mutawwa'in do not always comply with the requirements. The Government has not criticized abuses by the Mutawwa'in directly, but criticism of the group has appeared in the largely government-controlled English-language press. The Government has sought to curtail these abuses; however, the abuses continue.

Mutawwa'in enforcement of strict standards of social behavior included closing commercial establishments during five daily prayer observances, insisting upon compliance with strict norms of public dress and dispersing gatherings in public places. Mutawwa'in frequently reproached citizen and foreign women for failure to observe strict dress codes, and detained men and women found together who were not married or closely related.

The Mutawwa'in have the authority to detain persons for no more than 24 hours for violation of strict standards of proper dress and behavior; however, they sometimes exceeded this limit before delivering detainees to the police. Procedures require a police officer to accompany the Mutawwa'in at the time of arrest. Mutawwa'in generally complied with this requirement. According to reports, the Mutawwa'in also are no longer permitted to detain citizens for more than a few hours, may not conduct investigations, and may no longer allow unpaid volunteers to accompany official patrols.

Forced Religious Conversion

Under the law, children of Saudi fathers are considered Muslim, regardless of the county or the religious tradition in which they may have been raised. In some cases, children raised in other countries and in other religious traditions who came to Saudi Arabia or who were taken by their Saudi fathers to Saudi Arabia reportedly were coerced to conform to Islamic norms and practices, although forcible conversion is prohibited. There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States during the period covered by this report, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States. However, there was a report that prior to the period covered by this report, at least one U.S. citizen child in the country was subjected to pressure—and at times force—by her Saudi relatives to renounce Christianity and conform to Islamic norms and practices. The child has since returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government welcomed two delegations on freedom of religion from the United States: Members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom visited in March 2001 and the Director of the Office of International Religious Freedom in the U.S. Department of State visited in January 2001. In meetings with these officials and others, senior Saudi government officials stated that the Government will not interfere in private non-Muslim worship and invited the U.S. Government to provide specific information if that policy is violated.

According to press reports, in early 2001, the Government quietly lifted the requirement that Shi'a obtain advance permission to travel to Iran, thus effectively allowing them to visit pilgrimage sites in Iran without prior notice.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is societal discrimination against members of the Shi'a minority; however, improved relations between Iran (a predominately Shi'a nation) and Saudi Arabia in the period covered by this report continued to improve the climate of Sunni-Shi'a relations in the country.

The overwhelming majority of citizens support an Islamic state and oppose public non-Muslim worship. The majority of non-Muslims who undertook religious observances privately and discreetly during the period covered by this report were not disturbed; however, problems occurred after some Saudis complained to the authorities about services by their neighbors. While some non-Muslims claim that paid informants infiltrate their private worship groups and that employers did not renew the work contracts of non-Muslim employees who were found to be participating in worship groups, employers indicated contracts were not renewed because of performance problems or efforts to increase employment opportunities for Saudi workers.

Relations between Saudi Muslims and foreign Muslims are generally good. Each year the country welcomes approximately 2 million Muslim pilgrims from all over the world and of all branches of Islam, who visit the country during a 2-week period to perform the Hajj. Foreign Muslims of all denominations may pray freely in mosques as long as they follow Saudi Sunni prayer practices, although foreign imams have a more difficult time obtaining employment in mosques than their Saudi counterparts.

In certain areas, religious vigilantes unaffiliated with the Government and acting on their own harassed, assaulted, battered, arrested, and detained citizens and foreigners.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Senior U.S. government officials and members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom raised the issue of religious freedom with government officials on numerous occasions during the period covered by this report. U.S. government officials met with senior government officials to confirm the Government's commitment to permit private non-Muslim worship and to discuss other concerns related to religious freedom. In September 2000, U.S. Embassy officers met with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials to deliver and discuss the U.S. Government's 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom and to protest the detention of Filipino worshippers arrested in December 2000. In addition, Embassy officers met with MFA officials at various other times during the year on matters pertaining to religious freedom.

SYRIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it imposes restrictions in some areas.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government monitors the activities of all groups, including religious groups, discourages aggressive proselytizing, and has banned the Jehovah's Witnesses as a politically-motivated Zionist organization.

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the generally free practice of religion. However, there are periodic reports of friction between religious faiths.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 71,498 square miles and its population is approximately 17 million. Sunni Muslims represent about 74 percent of the population (approximately 12.6 million persons). Other Muslim groups, including Druze, Alawi, Ismailis, Shi'a, and Yazidis, constitute an estimated 16 percent of the population (approximately 2.7 million persons). A variety of Christian denominations make up the remaining 10 percent of the population (approximately 1.7 million persons). The great majority of Christians belong to the Eastern groups that have existed in the country since the earliest days of Christianity. The main Eastern groups belong to autonomous Orthodox churches, the Uniate churches, which recognize the Roman Catholic Pope, and the independent Nestorian Church. There also are believed to be about 100 Jews. It is difficult to obtain precise population

estimates for various religious denominations due to government sensitivity to sectarian demographics.

The largest Christian denomination is the Greek Orthodox Church, known in Syria as the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. The Syrian Orthodox Church is notable for its use of a Syriac liturgy. Most Syrians of Armenian origin belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which uses an Armenian liturgy. The largest Uniate church in the country is the Greek Catholic Church. Other Uniate denominations include the Maronite Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, and the Chaldean Catholic Church, which derives from the Nestorian Church. The Government also permits the presence, both officially and unofficially, of other Christian denominations, including Baptist, Mennonite, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

Sunni Muslims are found throughout the country. Christians tend to be urbanized and most live in Damascus and Aleppo, although significant numbers live in the Hasaka governorate in the northeast. A majority of the Alawis live in the Latakia governorate. A significant majority of the Druze population resides in the rugged Jabal al-Arab region in the southeast. The few remaining Jews are concentrated in Damascus and Aleppo. Yazidis are found primarily in the northeast.

Foreign missionary groups are present but operate discreetly.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it imposes restrictions in some areas. The only advantage given to a particular religion by the Constitution is the requirement that the President be a Muslim. There is no official state religion, although the majority of the population is Sunni Muslim.

All religions and orders must register with the Government, which monitors fundraising and requires permits for all meetings by religious (and non-religious) groups, except for worship. Recognized religious groups receive free utilities and are exempt from real estate taxes and personal property taxes on official vehicles.

There is a strict de facto separation of church and state. Religious groups tend to avoid any involvement in internal political affairs. The Government, in turn, generally refrains from becoming involved in strictly religious issues, including direct support for programs promoting interfaith understanding. Nevertheless, government policies tend to support the study and practice of moderate forms of Islam.

The Government generally does not prohibit links by its citizens with coreligionists in other countries or with a supranational hierarchy. In May 2001, Pope John Paul II visited the country and conducted a public mass in Damascus, which representatives of all of the country's Orthodox and Uniate Christian denominations attended. The Government also allowed the Pope to tour the Ummayyad Mosque in Damascus, which was the first time in history that a Pontiff visited a mosque. At a ceremony welcoming the Pope to the country, President Bashar al-Asad gave a speech that was widely denounced as anti-Semitic (see Section IV).

Officially, all schools are government run and nonsectarian, although some schools are run in practice by Christian and Jewish minorities. There is mandatory religious instruction in schools, with government-approved teachers and curricula. Religion courses are divided into separate classes for Muslim and Christian students. Jews have a separate primary school, which offers religious instruction on Judaism, in addition to traditional subjects. Although Arabic is the official language in public schools, the Government permits the teaching of Armenian, Hebrew, Syriac (Aramaic) and Chaldean in some schools on the basis that these are "liturgical languages."

Both Orthodox and Western Easter and three Muslim religious holidays (Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, and the Prophet Mohammed's birthday) are recognized as national holidays.

Religious groups are subject to their respective religious laws on marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In 1964 the Government banned Jehovah's Witnesses as a politically-motivated Zionist organization. Although Jehovah's Witnesses have continued to practice their faith privately despite the official ban, the Government arrested several members of Jehovah's Witnesses as they gathered for religious meetings in 1997. It is not known whether they still are in custody.

Although the law does not prohibit proselytizing, the Government discourages such activity in practice, particularly when such activity is deemed a threat to the generally good relations among religious groups.

The security services constantly are alert to any possible political threat to the State and all groups, religious and non-religious, are subject to surveillance and monitoring by government security services. The Government considers militant Islam in particular a threat to the regime and follows closely the practice of its adherents. The Government has allowed many mosques to be built; however, sermons are monitored and controlled and mosques are closed between prayers.

For primarily political rather than religious reasons, Jews generally are barred from government employment and do not have military service obligations. Jews also are the only religious minority group whose passports and identity cards note their religion.

Government policy officially disavows sectarianism of any kind. However, in the case of Alawis, religion can be a contributing factor in determining career opportunities. For example, members of the President's Alawi sect hold a predominant position in the security services and military, well out of proportion to their percentage of the population.

For Muslims personal status law on divorce is based on Shari'a (Islamic law), and some of its provisions discriminate against women. For example, husbands may claim adultery as grounds for divorce, but wives face more difficulty in presenting the same case. If a woman requests a divorce from her husband, she may not be entitled to child support in some instances. In addition under the law a woman loses the right to custody of boys when they reach age 9 and girls at age 12. Inheritance for Muslims also is based on Shari'a. Accordingly Muslim women usually are granted half of the inheritance share of male heirs. However, Shari'a mandates that male heirs provide financial support to the female relatives who inherit less. For example, a brother who inherits an unmarried sister's share from their parents' estate is obligated to provide for the sister's well-being. If the brother fails to do so, she has the right to sue. Polygyny is legal but it practiced only by a small minority of Muslim men.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were credible reports of large-scale arrests of Syrian and Palestinian Islamists affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Liberation Party in late 1999 and early 2000. Some of the Islamist prisoners reportedly were tortured in detention. These arrests were motivated primarily by political reasons based on the Government's view of militant Islamists as potential threats to the stability of the regime. In November 1999, the Government declared an amnesty for 600 political prisoners and detainees and a general pardon for some nonpolitical prisoners. There were credible reports that several hundred Islamists were among those political prisoners who benefited from the amnesty, but it is believed that some remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

Following an October 2000 attack by a group of Palestinians on a synagogue in Damascus (see Section III), the Government took immediate steps to ensure that the Jewish community would be protected from further attacks, including arresting the perpetrators and posting guards around synagogues and the Jewish quarter of Damascus.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities generally are amicable, and there is little evidence of societal discrimination or violence against religious minorities. However, there are periodic reports of friction between religious faiths, which may be related to deteriorating economic conditions and internal political issues. On October 12, 2000, a group of Palestinians threw bricks, stones, and Molotov cocktails at a synagogue in Damascus, apparently in reaction to the Israeli Government's use of force against Palestinians in the occupied territories. No one was injured in the attack; however, the synagogue was damaged slightly and closed for approximately 1 month. The Government took immediate steps to ensure that the Jewish community would be protected from further attacks (see Section II).

Although no law prohibits religious denominations from proselytizing, the Government is sensitive to complaints by religious groups of aggressive proselytizing by other groups and has intervened when such activities threatened the relations among religions. Societal conventions make conversions relatively rare, especially in the case of Muslim-to-Christian conversions. In many cases, societal pressure forces those who undertake such conversions to relocate within the country or to depart Syria in order to practice their new religion openly.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials meet routinely with religious leaders and adherents of almost all denominations at the national, regional, and local levels. In May 2001, the State Department spokesman criticized as unacceptable and regrettable President Asad's speech during the Pope's visit, in which he characterized Jews as the betrayers of Christ and the Prophet Mohammed (see Section II).

The Embassy funded two programs to promote religious freedom and tolerance during the period covered by this report. Embassy officials remain sensitive to any change in the degree of religious freedom in the country.

TUNISIA

Islam is the state religion. The Constitution provides for the free exercise of other religions that do not disturb the public order, and the Government generally observes and enforces this right; however, there were some restrictions and abuses.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government does not permit the establishment of political parties on the basis of Islam, prohibits proselytizing, and partially limits the religious freedom of Baha'is.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's land area is 63,170 square miles and the vast majority of its population of 9.2 million is nominally Muslim. There is no reliable data on the number of practicing Muslims. There is a small indigenous Sufi Muslim community but no statistics regarding its size. Reliable sources report that many Sufis left the country shortly after independence when their religious buildings and land reverted to the Government (as did those of Orthodox Islamic foundations), leaving them no place to worship. Although the Sufi community is small, its tradition of mysticism permeates the practice of Islam throughout the country. During annual Ramadan festivals, Sufis provide public cultural entertainment with whirling dervish dances.

The nominal Christian community—composed of foreign temporary and permanent residents and a small group of native-born citizens of both European and Arab origin—numbers approximately 20,000 and is dispersed throughout the country. According to church leaders, the practicing Christian population numbers approximately 2,000 and includes an estimated 200 native-born ethnic Arab citizens who have converted to Christianity. The Catholic Church operates 5 churches, 14 private schools, and 7 cultural centers throughout the country, as well as 1 hospital in Tunis, the capital. It has approximately 1,400 practicing members, composed of temporary and permanent foreign residents and a small number of native-born citizens of European and Arab origin. In addition to holding religious services, the Catholic Church also freely organizes cultural activities and performs charitable work throughout the country. The Russian Orthodox Church has 100 practicing members and operates two churches—one in Tunis and one in Bizerte. The French Reform Church operates one church in Tunis, with a congregation of 140 primarily foreign members. The Anglican Church has approximately 50 foreign members who worship in a church in Tunis. The 30-member Greek Orthodox Church maintains one church each in Tunis, Sousse, and Jerba. A community of 43 Jehovah's Witnesses, of which about half are foreign residents and half are native-born citizens, also exists.

With 1,800 adherents split nearly equally between the capital and the island of Jerba, the Jewish community is the country's largest indigenous religious minority.

The Jewish community on the island of Jerba dates back 2,500 years. There are also 150 members of the Baha'i Faith.

There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country. Foreign missionary organizations and groups do not operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Islam is the state religion. The Constitution provides for the free exercise of other religions that do not disturb the public order, and the Government generally observes and enforces this right; however, it does not permit the establishment of political parties based on religion, prohibits proselytizing, and partially limits the religious freedom of Baha'is. The Constitution stipulates that the President of the Republic must be a Muslim.

The Government recognizes all Christian and Jewish religious organizations that were established before independence in 1956. Although the Government permits Christian churches to operate freely, only the Catholic Church has formal recognition from the postindependence Government. The other churches operate under land grants signed by the Bey of Tunis in the 18th and 19th centuries, which are respected by the Government. During the period covered by this report, the Government refused recognition of a Jewish religious organization in Jerba; however, the group has been permitted to operate, and it performs religious activities and charity work unhindered.

The Muslim holidays of Aid El-Kebir, Ras Al-Am El-Hejri, Mouled, and Aid Essighir are observed as national holidays; there is no reported adverse effect on other religious groups related to such observance.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding by sponsoring regular conferences and seminars on religious tolerance and by facilitating and promoting the annual Jewish pilgrimage to the El-Ghriba Synagogue.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government controls and subsidizes mosques and pays the salaries of prayer leaders. The President appoints the Grand Mufti of the Republic. The 1988 Law on Mosques provides that only personnel appointed by the Government may lead activities in mosques, and stipulates that mosques must remain closed except during prayer times and other authorized religious ceremonies, such as marriages or funerals. New mosques may be built in accordance with national urban planning regulations but become the property of the State. The Government also partially subsidizes the Jewish community.

The Government does not permit the establishment of political parties on the basis of religion, and uses this prohibition to refuse recognition of the An-Nahda party and to prosecute suspected party members on the grounds of membership in an illegal organization. The Government maintains tight surveillance over Islamists and members of the Islamic fundamentalist community. The Government has revoked the identity cards of an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 Islamists and fundamentalists, which prevents them from being employed legally, attending court hearings, or using public telephones or faxes. According to reliable sources, the Government has refused to issue passports to Islamists and fundamentalists. The Government forbids the wearing of hijab (traditional headscarves worn by Islamist and Islamic fundamentalist women) in government offices.

The Government allows the Jewish community freedom of worship and pays the salary of the Grand Rabbi. It also partially subsidizes restoration and maintenance costs for some synagogues. In October 1999, the provisional Jewish community elected a new board of directors, its first since independence in 1956, but continues to await approval from the governor of Tunis. Once approval is obtained from the governor, which originally was expected to be only a formality, the committee is expected to receive permanent status. The acting board has changed its name to the Jewish Committee of Tunisia. The Government permits the Jewish community to operate private religious schools and allows Jewish children on the island of Jerba to split their academic day between secular public schools and private religious schools. The Government also encourages Jewish émigrés to return for the annual Jewish pilgrimage to the historic El-Ghriba Synagogue on the island of Jerba. However, during the period covered by this report, the Government refused recognition of a Jewish religious organization in Jerba, although the group has been permitted to operate and perform religious activities and charity work unhindered.

The Government regards the Baha'i Faith as a heretical sect of Islam and permits its adherents to practice their faith only in private. Although the Government permits Baha'is to hold meetings of their National Council in private homes, it report-

edly has prohibited them from organizing local councils. The Government reportedly pressures Baha'is to eschew organized religious activities. There are credible reports that police periodically call in prominent Baha'is for questioning. The Government also unofficially denied Baha'i requests during the period covered by this report for permission to elect local assemblies. The Government also does not permit Baha'is to accept a declaration of faith from persons who wish to convert to the Baha'i Faith. There were credible reports that four members of the Baha'i Faith were interrogated by Ministry of Interior officials in 1999 and pressed to sign a statement that they would not practice their religion and would not hold meetings in their homes.

In general the Government does not permit Christian groups to establish new churches, and proselytizing is viewed as an act against the public order. Foreign missionary organizations and groups do not operate in the country. Authorities ask foreigners suspected of proselytizing to depart the country and do not permit them to return. There were no reported cases of official action against persons suspected of proselytizing during the period covered by this report; however, there were reports that materials distributed by Christian missionaries in Sfax were confiscated from local secondary students.

There were reports of cases during the period covered by this report in which the Government punished individuals who converted to another faith from Islam by denying them the ability to obtain a passport, to vote, and to enlist in the military, among other rights.

Islamic religious education is mandatory in public schools, but the religious curriculum for secondary school students also includes the history of Judaism and Christianity. The Zeitouna Koranic School is part of the Government's national university system.

Both religious and secular nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) are governed by the same law and administrative regulations on association that impose some restrictions on freedom of assembly. For example, all NGO's are required to notify the Government of meetings to be held in public spaces at least 3 days in advance and to submit lists of all meeting participants to the Ministry of Interior. During the period covered by this report, there were credible reports that two Christian religious organizations did not attempt to register because they believed that their applications would be rejected, although they were able to function freely under the auspices of their respective churches. Neither group believed that it was a victim of religious discrimination. A third group, composed of foreign Christians mostly from Sweden and the United Kingdom, is active in providing medical and social services in the city of Kasserine in the west. Despite its ambiguous legal status, this group (with 15 to 20 members) reports that it has been free to pursue its social and medical work without interference and states that it does not believe that it has been subject to religious discrimination.

Religious groups are subjected to the same restrictions on freedom of speech and the press as secular groups. Primary among these restrictions is "depot legal," the requirement that printers and publishers provide copies of all publications to the Chief Prosecutor, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Culture prior to publication. Similarly, distributors must deposit copies of publications printed abroad with the Chief Prosecutor and various ministries prior to their public release. Although Christian groups reported that they were able to distribute previously approved religious publications in European languages without difficulty, they claimed that the Government generally did not approve either publication or distribution of Arabic-language Christian material. Moreover, authorized distribution of religious publications was limited to existing religious communities, because the Government views public distribution of both religious and secular documents as a threat to the public order and hence an illegal act.

Muslim women are not permitted to marry outside their religion. Marriages of Muslim women to non-Muslim men abroad are considered common-law, which are prohibited and thus void when the couple returns to the country. Non-Muslim women who marry Muslim men are not permitted to inherit from their husbands, nor may the husbands and any children (who are considered to be Muslim) from the marriage inherit from the non-Muslim wife.

Although civil law is codified, judges are known to override codified law with their interpretation of Shari'a (Islamic law) if codified law contradicts it. For example, codified laws provide women with the legal right to have custody over minor children; however, judges have refused to grant women permission to leave the country with minor children, holding that Shari'a appoints the father as the head of the family who must grant children permission to travel. In 1999 one human rights activist reported that Ministry of Interior officials refused to issue her minor son a passport because the child's father, who was then jailed, was not present to give permission.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, credible sources estimate as many as 1,000 persons were serving prison sentences because of their membership in the illegal Islamist group An-Nahda or for their alleged Islamist sympathies; however, there were no reports of cases in which it was clear that persons were arrested or detained based solely on their religious beliefs.

During the period covered by this report, the Government tried and convicted numerous suspected members of the Islamist community on charges of belonging to an illegal organization. For example, Mehdi Zoughah was convicted in February 2001 of belonging to an illegal organization for purportedly holding a meeting with An-Nahda leader Salah Kerker in Marseille, France, in the early 1990s. Zoughah was convicted on the basis of a single witness whom the Government could not produce in court. Haroun M'barak was convicted in March 2001 of belonging to an illegal organization, An-Nahda, on the basis of a statement by a witness that had been retracted. On August 30, 2000, An-Nahda prisoner Taoufik Chaieb was released from jail after he held a 51-day hunger strike. Presiding judges in trials of Islamists routinely refuse to investigate claims by defendants that their confessions were extracted under torture.

Sources report that police awaken suspected Islamists in the night and bring them to police headquarters for interrogation. Human rights activists allege that the Government subjected the family members of Islamist activists to arbitrary arrest, reportedly utilizing charges of "association with criminal elements" to punish family members for the actions of the activists.

According to human rights lawyers, the Government regularly questioned Muslims who were observed praying frequently in mosques. Reliable sources report that the authorities instruct imams to espouse government social and economic programs during prayer times in Mosques.

Forced Religious Conversion

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

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

There were no incidents of religiously motivated violence. However, there is great societal pressure for Muslims not to convert to other religions, and conversion from Islam is relatively rare. Muslims who do convert may face social ostracism for converting. There is some conversion among individuals in the Christian and Jewish communities.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains good relations with leaders of majority and minority religious groups throughout the country, and the Ambassador and other embassy officials met regularly with Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Baha'i religious leaders throughout the period covered by this report. Embassy officials discussed religious freedom issues with government officials on various occasions during the year.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The federal Constitution designates Islam as the official religion, and Islam is also the official religion of all seven of the constituent emirates of the federal union. The federal Constitution also provides for the freedom to exercise religious worship in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals, and the Government generally respects this right in practice and does not interfere with the private practice of religion; however, it limits the number of officially recognized religions, controls virtually all Sunni mosques, grants only a small number of Christian denominations recognition, prohibits proselytizing, and restricts the ability of nonrecognized religions to conduct business as organized groups.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to a relatively tolerant atmosphere for the practice of a wide variety of faiths, albeit within the context of a predominantly Muslim society in which Islam has a privileged status and not all non-Islamic religions have equal legal standing.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total land area is 32,300 square miles and its population is approximately 3.1 million. More than 80 percent of the population are non-citizens. All of the country's citizens are Muslims, with approximately 85 percent followers of Sunni Islam and the remaining 15 percent followers of Shi'a Islam. Naturalization of new citizens is limited to Sunni Muslims. Approximately 80 percent of the population are foreigners, predominantly from South and Southeast Asia. A substantial number of foreign professionals are citizens of countries in the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Although no official figures are available, local observers estimate that approximately 55 percent of the foreign population are Muslim, 25 percent are Hindu, 10 percent are Christian, 5 percent are Buddhist, and 5 percent are a mixture of other faiths, including Ismailis, Parsis, Baha'is, and Sikhs (most of whom reside in the Dubai and Abu Dhabi).

No foreign missionaries operate in the country.

There are no available statistics on the number of atheists.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The federal Constitution designates Islam as the official religion, and Islam is also the official religion of all seven of the individual emirates in the federal union. The federal Constitution also provides for the freedom to exercise religious worship in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government controls virtually all Sunni mosques. It funds or subsidizes virtually all such mosques and employs all Sunni imams. The Government also distributes guidance on religious sermons and monitors for political content sermons delivered in all mosques, whether Sunni or Shi'a; however, the Government does not appoint the imams in the country's Shi'a mosques. The Government prohibits proselytizing by non-Muslims.

The Government does not recognize all non-Muslim religions. In those emirates that officially recognize and thereby grant a legal identity to non-Muslim religious groups, only a limited number of Christian groups are granted this recognition. While recognizing the difference between Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity, the authorities make no legal distinction between Christian groups, particularly Protestants. Several often unrelated Christian congregations are required to share common facilities because of limitations on the number of Christian denominations that are recognized officially. Non-Muslim and non-Christian religions are not recognized legally in any of the emirates. Partly as a result of emirate policies regarding recognition of non-Muslim denominations, facilities for Christian congregations are far greater in number and size than those for non-Christian and non-Muslim groups, despite the fact that Christians are a small minority of non-Muslim foreigners.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Virtually all Sunni mosques are government funded or subsidized; about 5 percent of Sunni mosques are entirely private, and several large mosques have large private endowments. The federal Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs distributes weekly guidance to both Sunni and Shi'a sheikhs regarding religious sermons and ensures that clergy do not deviate frequently or significantly from approved topics in their sermons. All Sunni imams are employees of either the federal Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs or of individual emirate ministries. In 1993 the Emirate of Dubai placed private mosques under the control of its Department of Islamic Affairs and Endowments. This change gave the Government control over the appointment of preachers and the conduct of their work.

The Shi'a minority, which is concentrated in the northern emirates, is free to worship and maintain its own mosques. All Shi'a mosques are considered private and receive no funds from the Government. The Government does not appoint sheikhs for Shi'a mosques. Shi'a Muslims in Dubai may pursue Shi'a family law cases through a special Shi'a council rather than the Shari'a courts.

Major cities have Christian churches, some built on land donated by the ruling families of the emirates in which they are located. In early 2001, ground was broken for the construction of several churches on a parcel of land in Jebel Ali donated by the Government of Dubai for four Protestant congregations and a Catholic congregation. In May 2001, the Crown Prince of Dubai authorized the construction of a Greek Orthodox church on donated land. Also in 2001, the Catholic church received permission to establish a secondary school in Fujairah. Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah are also home to Catholic primary and secondary schools. In 1999 land was designated in Ras Al-Khaymah Emirate for the construction of a new Catholic Church. In Sharjah a new Catholic church was opened in 1997 and a new Armenian Orthodox church in 1998, both with public ceremonies. Also in 1998, land was designated in Jebel Ali for the construction of a second Christian cemetery, and Abu Dhabi emirate donated land for the expansion of existing Christian burial facilities. The Dubai Government permits one Hindu temple and two Sikh temples to operate. There are no such temples elsewhere in the country. There are no Buddhist temples; however, Buddhists, along with Hindus and Sikhs in cities without temples, conduct religious ceremonies in private homes without interference. In 1998 Abu Dhabi Emirate donated land for the establishment of the country's first Baha'i cemetery. There are only two operating cremation facilities and associated cemeteries for the large Hindu community, one in Dubai and one in Sharjah. Official permission must be obtained for their use in every instance, posing a hardship for the large Hindu community, and neither facility accepts Hindus who have died in other parts of the country for cremation or burial. The remains of Hindus who die outside Dubai and Sharjah in all cases must be repatriated to their home country at considerable expense.

Non-Muslims in the country are free to practice their religion but may not proselytize publicly or distribute religious literature. The Government follows a policy of tolerance towards non-Muslim religions and, in practice, interferes very little in the religious activities of non-Muslims. Apparent differences in the treatment of Muslim and non-Muslim groups often have their origin in the dichotomy between citizens and noncitizens rather than in religious difference.

Apart from donated land for the construction of churches and other religious facilities, including cemeteries, non-Muslim groups are not supported financially or subsidized by the Government. However, they are permitted to raise money from among their congregants and to receive financial support from abroad. Christian churches are permitted to openly advertise certain church functions, such as memorial services, in the press.

The conversion of Muslims to other religions is regarded with extreme antipathy. While there is no law against missionary activities, authorities have threatened to revoke the residence permits of persons suspected of such activities, and customs authorities have questioned the entry of large quantities of religious materials (Bibles, hymnals, etc.) that they deemed in excess of the normal requirements of existing congregations, although in most instances the questions have been resolved and the items have been admitted.

There have been reports that customs authorities are less likely to question the importation of Christian religious items than non-Muslim, non-Christian religious items, although in virtually all instances importation of the material in question eventually has been permitted.

Although immigration authorities routinely ask foreigners to declare their religious affiliation, the Government does not collect or analyze this information, and religious affiliation is not a factor in the issuance or renewal of visas or residence permits.

Family law for Muslims is governed by Shari'a and the local Shari'a courts. As such, Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims. Such a marriage may result in both partners being arrested and tried. Shari'a, according to the Maliki school of jurisprudence, is also applied in cases of divorce. Women are granted custody of female children until they reach the age of maturity and are granted temporary custody of male children until they reach the age of 12. If the mother is deemed unfit, custody reverts to the next able female relative on the mother's side. Shari'a permits polygyny.

In November 1999, the Government sponsored the country's first ecumenical meeting, officially designated a seminar on "Islam and the West," in Abu Dhabi, in honor of the visit to the country of the United Kingdom's Prince Charles. The half-day seminar included statements by Islamic and Christian clerics and a brief discussion. In addition, the principal advisor to the ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi on relations with Christian denominations regularly represents the country at ecumenical conferences and events in other countries. In 1999 Dubai emirate established a center for the promotion of cultural understanding aimed at expanding contact and

interchange between the citizen and foreign populations. One of the center's goals is to expose foreigners to aspects of the indigenous culture, including Islam.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While citizens regard the country as a Muslim nation that should respect Muslim religious sensibilities on matters such as public consumption of alcohol, proper dress, and proper public comportment, society also places a high value on respect for privacy and on Islamic traditions of tolerance, particularly with respect to forms of Christianity. Casual attire for men and women is tolerated in areas and facilities frequented by foreigners, while hotels, stores, and other businesses patronized by both citizens and foreigners are permitted to sell alcohol and pork to non-Muslims, and to acknowledge, in modest displays, non-Muslim holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and Diwali (although such displays are not permitted during the month of Ramadan). Citizens occasionally express concern regarding the influence on society of the cultures of the country's foreign majority. However, in general citizens are familiar with foreign societies and believe that they can best limit unwanted foreign influence by supporting and strengthening indigenous cultural traditions. Slightly less tolerant attitudes by citizens toward non-Muslim and non-Christian faiths reflect both traditional Islamic views of these religions and the fact that Hindus and Buddhists in the country are overwhelmingly less-educated, less-affluent, and work in less desirable occupations.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

In early 1998, the Ambassador sent a letter to the Government of Dubai emirate in support of the request of three Protestant congregations for expanded facilities in Dubai, and later raised the issue in official meetings with Dubai emirate leaders. In response to these requests—and with the support of the U.S. and UK Embassies—Dubai emirate donated land for these facilities and granted permission for their construction. While originally three churches were proposed, the Dubai municipality instructed that the number of churches to be built on the site increase from three to seven. In early 2001, ground was broken for the construction of several churches on the site. In early 2001, the U.S. Ambassador sent a letter to the government of the Dubai emirate in support of the request of the Greek Orthodox congregation for the construction of a church in Dubai; the request was quickly approved by the Crown Prince of Dubai. The Ambassador and other embassy personnel also have participated regularly in ceremonies marking the opening or expansion of religious facilities, and embassy officers meet on occasion with Muslims, Christians, and representatives of other religious faiths.

YEMEN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions. The Constitution declares that Islam is the state religion. The Constitution also states that Shari'a (Islamic law) is the source of all legislation.

There was no change in the status of respect of religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Followers of religions other than Islam are free to worship according to their beliefs; however, the Government forbids conversions and prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing.

The amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of about 330,000 square miles and its population is approximately 18 million. Virtually all citizens are Muslims, either of the Zaydi order of Shi'a Islam or the Shafa'i order of Sunni Islam, representing approximately 35 percent and 65 percent of the total population, respectively. There are also a few thousand Ismaili Muslims, mostly in the north.

Almost all Christians are temporary foreign residents, except for a few families living in Aden that trace their origins to India. There are a few Hindus in Aden who also trace their origins to India. There are several churches and Hindu places of worship in Aden, but no non-Muslim public places of worship exist in the former North Yemen, largely because northern Yemen does not have a history of a large, resident foreign community as in the south.

Christian missionaries operate in Yemen and most are dedicated to the provision of medical services; others are employed in teaching and social services. Invited by the Government, the Sisters of Charity run homes for the poor and disabled in Sana'a, Taiz, Hodeida, and Aden. The Government has asked the Vatican to open additional Sisters of Charity facilities. The Government issues residence visas to priests so that they may provide for the community's religious needs. There is also a German Christian charitable mission in Hodeida and a Dutch Christian medical mission in Saada. An American Baptist congregation has run a hospital in Jibla for over 30 years. The Anglican Church runs a charitable clinic in Aden. An American nongovernmental organization (NGO), run by the Seventh-Day Adventists, works in the governorate of Hodeida.

Nearly all of the country's once sizable Jewish population has emigrated. Approximately 500 Jews are scattered in a handful of villages between Sana'a and Saada in northern Yemen.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions. The Constitution declares that Islam is the state religion. Followers of other religions are free to worship according to their beliefs and to wear religiously distinctive ornaments or dress; however, the Government forbids conversions, requires permission for the construction of new places of worship, and prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing and holding elected office. The Constitution states that Shari'a is the source of all legislation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing. Under Islam as applied in the country, the conversion of a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy, a crime punishable by death. There were no reports of cases in which the crime has been charged or prosecuted by government authorities. In January 2000, the director of the Aden office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) received a report that a Somali refugee, who allegedly had converted from Islam to Christianity after his arrival in Yemen, had been arrested for apostasy. The UNHCR's investigation found that the refugee had been detained on criminal charges previously by police in Aden and at the UNHCR's Al-Jahin camp. Although the refugee was registered with the UNHCR under a Christian name, he maintained an address in Sana'a under a Muslim name, was married to a Muslim woman, and possessed an Islamic marriage certificate. The UNHCR believed that authorities detained the refugee on criminal rather than religious grounds. The refugee was not charged formally and his trial was canceled. He was remanded to immigration detention, then released in July 2000. The UNHCR, with the Government's knowledge, arranged for the refugee to be resettled in a third country; he and his family departed the country on August 25, 2000.

The Government does not allow the building of new non-Muslim public places of worship without permission; however, in 1998 the country established diplomatic relations with the Vatican and agreed to the construction and operation of a "Christian center" in Sana'a. Weekly services for Catholic, Protestant, and Ethiopian Christians are held in the auditorium of a private company in Sana'a without government interference. Christian church services are held regularly in other cities without harassment in private homes or facilities such as schools, and these facilities appear adequate to accommodate the small numbers involved. The Papal Nuncio, resident in Kuwait, presented his credentials to the Government in March 2000. The country's ambassador to Italy was accredited to the Vatican in July 1999. Presi-

dent Ali Abdullah Saleh paid an official visit to the Vatican at the time of his state visit to Italy in April 2000.

Public schools provide instruction in Islam but not in other religions. However, almost all non-Muslims are foreigners who attend private schools.

There are no legal restrictions on the few hundred Jews who remain in the country, although there are traditional restrictions on places of residence and choice of employment (see Section III). In mid-2000, the Government suspended its policy of allowing Yemeni-origin Israeli passport holders to travel to Yemen on laissez-passer documents. However, Yemeni, Israeli, and other Jews may travel freely to and within Yemen on non-Israeli passports.

The Government monitors mosques for sermons that incite violence or other political statements that it considers harmful to public security. Private Islamic organizations may maintain ties to pan-Islamic organizations and in the past have operated private schools. However, in May 2001, the Government mandated the implementation of a 1992 law to unify educational curriculums and administration of all publicly funded schools. Publicly funded Islamic schools will be absorbed into the national system.

Non-Muslims may vote; however, they may not hold elected office.

Following unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, owners of property previously expropriated by the Communist government of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, including religious organizations, were invited to seek restitution of their property. However, implementation of the process, including for religious institutions, has been extremely limited, and very few properties have been returned to any previous owner.

Shari'a-based law and social custom discriminate against women. Men are permitted to take as many as four wives, although very few do so. By law the minimum age of marriage is 15. However, the law largely is not enforced, and some girls marry as early as age 12. The law stipulates that the wife's "consent" to the marriage is required; "consent" is defined as "silence" for previously unwed women and "pronouncement of consent" for divorced women. The husband and the wife's "guardian" (usually her father) sign the marriage contract; in Aden and some outlying governorates, the wife also signs. The practice of bride-price payments is widespread, despite efforts to limit the size of such payments.

The law provides that the wife must obey the husband. She must live with him at the place stipulated in the contract, consummate the marriage, and not leave the home without his consent. Husbands may divorce wives without justifying their action in court; however, courts routinely mandate lengthy reconciliation periods prior to granting the husband's petition for divorce. A woman has the legal right to divorce; however, she must provide a justification, such as her husband's nonsupport, impotence, abrogation of the marriage contract (for example, of guarantees regarding her education or employment options), or taking of a second wife without her consent. A woman seeking a divorce also must repay the mahr (a portion of her bride price), which creates an additional hardship.

Women who seek to travel abroad must obtain permission from their husbands or fathers to receive a passport and to travel. They also are expected to be accompanied by male relatives. However, enforcement of this requirement is irregular. Shari'a-based law permits a Muslim man to marry a Christian or Jewish woman, but no Muslim woman may marry outside of Islam. Yemeni women do not have the right to confer citizenship on their foreign-born spouses; however, they may confer citizenship on children born in Yemen of foreign-born fathers.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Official government policy does not prohibit or provide punishment for the possession of non-Islamic religious literature. However, there are unconfirmed reports that foreigners, on occasion, have been harassed by police for possessing such literature. In addition, some members of the security forces occasionally censor the mail of Christian clergy who minister to the foreign community, ostensibly to prevent proselytizing.

There are unconfirmed reports that some police, without the authorization or knowledge of their superiors, on occasion have harassed and detained persons suspected of apostasy in order to compel them to renounce their conversions.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country is overwhelmingly Muslim. There are very small numbers of religious minorities, and relations among religious groups generally are amicable. There were no reported incidents of violence or discrimination between the adherents of the two main orders, Zaydi and Shafa'i Islam. Religiously motivated violence is neither incited nor tolerated by the Islamic clergy, except for a small politically motivated clerical minority, often with ties to foreign extremist elements.

The tiny number of religious minorities generally live in harmony with their Muslim neighbors. Apart from a small but undetermined number of Christians and Hindus of South Asian origin in Aden, Jews are the only indigenous religious minority. Their numbers have diminished significantly—from several tens of thousands to a few hundred—due to voluntary emigration over the last 50 years. Although the law makes no distinction, Jews traditionally are restricted to living in one section of a city or village and often are confined to a limited choice of employment, usually farming or handicrafts (primarily silver working). They are respected for their craftsmanship and their silver work is highly prized. Jews may, and do, own land. They may vote; however, as non-Muslims, they may not hold elected office (see Section II). Traditionally the tribal leaders of the regions in which the Jews have resided are responsible for protecting the Jews in their areas. A failure to provide this protection is considered a serious personal dishonor.

Christian clergy who minister to the foreign community are employed in teaching, social services, and health care.

A small bomb blasted a 12-foot hole in the wall of Christ Church in Aden on January 1, 2001; there were no reported injuries. The perpetrator, whom authorities believe is linked to extremist Islamic groups, was arrested in January 2001 and was awaiting trial at the end of the period covered by this report. On January 10, 2001, in the village of Dhabyan in Amran governorate, an armed individual opened fire on worshipers during evening prayers at the local mosque. Four men were killed and 17 wounded, 7 critically. The shootings appeared to be criminally rather than religiously motivated.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains an active dialog on human rights issues with the Government, NGO's, and others, and discusses religious freedom issues in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officers, including the Ambassador, meet periodically with representatives of the Jewish and Christian communities.

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN¹

Freedom of religion is restricted severely. Due to the absence of a constitution and the ongoing civil war, freedom of religion is determined primarily by the unofficial, unwritten, and evolving policies of the warring factions. In 1999 the Taliban, the ultraconservative Islamic movement that controls approximately 90 percent of the country, claimed that it was drafting a new constitution based on Islamic law. Although a spokesperson for the Taliban claimed that the new constitution would ensure the rights of all Muslims and religious minorities, custom and law require affiliation with some religion, and atheism is punishable by death. By the end of the period covered by this report, a new constitution had not been promulgated.

The status of respect for religious freedom continued to deteriorate during the period covered by this report due to the civil war, the policies of the Taliban, and the policies of the Taliban's opponents. Repression by the Taliban of the Hazara ethnic group, which is predominantly Shi'a Muslim, was particularly severe. Although the conflict between the Hazaras and the Taliban is political and military as well as religious, and it is not possible to state with certainty that the Taliban engaged in its campaign against the Shi'a solely because of their religious beliefs, the religious affiliation of the Hazaras apparently was a significant factor leading to their repression. The Taliban sought to impose its extreme interpretation of Islamic observance in areas that it controlled and has declared that all Muslims in areas under Taliban control must abide by the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law. The Taliban relies on a religious police force under the control of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (PVPV) to enforce rules regarding appearance, dress, employment, access to medical care, behavior, religious practice, and freedom of expression. Persons found to be in violation of the edicts are subject to punishment meted out on the spot, which may include beatings, detention, or both. In practice, the rigid policies adopted both by the Taliban and by certain opposition groups affect adversely adherents of other branches of Islam and of other faiths.

Relations between the different branches of Islam in the country are difficult. Historically, the minority Shi'a faced discrimination from the majority Sunni population.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul has been closed since 1989 for security reasons. Although the United States does not recognize any of the warring factions as the Government of Afghanistan, U.S. Government officials have raised religious freedom issues with representatives of the factions on several occasions during the period covered by this report. U.S. Government officials have made similar approaches to other governments, including countries with influence in Afghanistan.

In September 2000, the former Secretary of State identified the Taliban as a particularly severe violator of religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 251,738 square miles and its population is approximately 25 million. Reliable data on the country's religious demography is not available. However, observers estimate that 85 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim; most of the remaining 15 percent are Shi'a Muslim. The Hazara ethnic group is predominantly Shi'a; Shi'a are among the most economically disadvantaged persons in the country. The Shi'a minority wants a national government that would give them equal rights as citizens. There also are small numbers of Ismailis living in the central and northern parts of the country. Ismailis are Shi'a Muslims, but consider the Aga Khan their spiritual leader.

¹Information on the religious freedom situation in Afghanistan is limited because there is no U.S. Government presence in the country.

Traditionally, Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence has been the dominant religion. The Taliban also adheres to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, making it the current dominant religion in the country. For the last 200 years, Sunnis often have looked to the example of the Deoband madrassa (religious school) near Delhi, India. Most of the Taliban leadership attended Deobandi-influenced seminaries in Pakistan. The Deoband school has long sought to purify Islam by discarding supposedly un-Islamic accretions to the faith and reemphasizing the models established in the Koran and the customary practices of the Prophet Mohammed. Additionally, Deobandi scholars often have opposed what they perceive as Western influences. Much of the population adheres to Deobandi-influenced Hanafi Sunnism, but a sizable minority adheres to a more mystical version of Hanafi Sunnism generally known as Sufism. Sufism centers on orders or brotherhoods that follow charismatic religious leaders.

The Taliban's chief opposition is the Northern Alliance, which, under the nominal leadership of Burhanuddin Rabbani, is made up of various smaller anti-Taliban groups. Rabbani and his Defense Minister, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, are both Tajiks and control a largely Tajik-inhabited territory in the northeast. Other members of the Northern Alliance include ethnic Hazara, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and other smaller groups. Some other smaller ethnic groups are Shi'a Muslims. Within the respective factions, there are economic, political, and military advantages to belonging to the dominant faith or ethnic group in a given faction. Conversely, members of a different faith may encounter disadvantages if they seek full membership in a particular faction. The Taliban has brought several prominent Shi'a commanders into its organization in an effort to counter the perception that it is an exclusively Sunni Pashtun movement. The Northern Alliance includes several Pashtuns in prominent roles, although its supporters largely come from the non-Pashtun minorities.

In the past, small communities of Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Christians lived in the country; however, most members of these communities have left. Even at their peak, these non-Muslim minorities constituted only 1 percent of the population. Almost all members of the country's small Hindu and Sikh population, which once numbered about 50,000 persons, have emigrated or taken refuge abroad. Non-Muslims such as Hindus and Sikhs now number only in the hundreds, often working as traders. The few Christians and Jews who live in the country apparently are almost all foreigners who are assigned temporarily to relief work by foreign non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

Several areas of the country are religiously homogeneous. Sunni Muslim Pashtuns, centered around the city of Kandahar, dominate the south, west, and east of the country. The homeland of the Shi'a Hazaras is in the Hazarajat or the mountainous central highlands around Bamiyan. Badakshan province, in the extreme northeast of the country, traditionally has been an Ismaili region. Other areas, including Kabul, the capital, are more heterogeneous. For example, in and around the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, there is a mix of Sunnis (including Pashtuns, Turkmen, Uzbeks, and Tajiks) and Shi'a (including Hazaras, Qizilbash, and Ismailis).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Freedom of religion is restricted severely. Due to the absence of a constitution and the ongoing civil war, religious freedom is determined primarily by the unofficial, unwritten, and evolving policies of the warring factions. In most parts of the country, the Pashtun-dominated ultraconservative Islamic movement known as the Taliban vigorously enforced its interpretation of Islamic law. The Taliban, which controls approximately 90 percent of the country, claimed in mid-1999 that it was drafting a new constitution, based upon the sources of Islamic religious law (Shari'a): the Koran, the Sunna, and Hanafi jurisprudence. A Taliban spokesman stated that the new constitution would ensure the rights of all Muslims and of religious minorities. However, custom and law require affiliation with some religion, and atheism is considered apostasy and is punishable by death. By the end of the period covered by this report, a new constitution had not been promulgated. The small number of non-Muslim residents who remain in the country may practice their faith; however, they may not proselytize.

The country's official name, according to the Taliban, is the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; however, according to the Northern Alliance, the umbrella organization of various smaller anti-Taliban groups, it is the Islamic State of Afghanistan. These names reflect the desire of both factions to promote Islam as the state religion. Taliban leader Mullah Omar carries the title of Commander of the Faithful.

Licensing and registration of religious groups reportedly are not required by the authorities in any part of the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In Taliban-controlled areas the authorities have decreed that all Muslims must take part in five daily prayers. Friday noon prayers at mosques reportedly are compulsory for Muslim men. However, women and girls reportedly are forbidden to enter mosques and therefore must pray at home.

In May 2001, according to news reports, the Taliban was considering an edict requiring Hindus to wear identifying badges on their clothing. On May 23, 2001, Taliban radio announced that the edict had been approved by religious officials; however, Mullah Omar reportedly did not sign the edict and the Taliban did not implement it by the end of the period covered by this report. The Taliban stated that the intent of the proposed edict is to protect Hindu citizens from harassment by members of the religious police. However, international observers regarded the proposed edict as part of the Taliban's efforts to segregate and isolate non-Muslim citizens, and to encourage more Hindu migration. The reactions of Hindu citizens reportedly ranged from indifference to outrage.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), in September 1999, the Taliban issued decrees that forbade non-Muslims from building places of worship but allowed them to worship at existing holy sites, forbade non-Muslims from criticizing Muslims, ordered non-Muslims to identify their houses by placing a yellow cloth on their rooftops, forbade non-Muslims from living in the same residence as Muslims, and required that non-Muslim women wear a yellow dress with a special mark so that Muslims could keep their distance. These decrees followed earlier reports that Hindus were required to wear a piece of yellow cloth attached to their clothing to identify their religious identity, and that Sikhs also were required to wear some form of identification. This system of identification allegedly was imposed to spare non-Muslims from the enforcement of rules that are mandatory for Muslims and from harassment by agents of the PVPV; however, the identification system reportedly no longer is enforced.

No information is available about any activities by Muslim missionaries in the country. According to a decree issued in June 2001, proselytizing by non-Muslims is prohibited, and is punishable by death or deportation in the case of foreigners. Taliban officials subsequently stated that the decree is only a guideline. A small number of foreign Christian groups are allowed in the country to provide humanitarian assistance; however, they are forbidden to proselytize. Conversion from Islam is considered apostasy and is punishable by death. There was no information available about converts, and no information available concerning restrictions on the training of clergy.

The Taliban does not encourage free speech about religious issues or frank discussions that challenge orthodox Sunni views. Publishing and distribution of literature of any kind, including religious material, is rare. The Taliban continues to prohibit music, movies, and television on religious grounds in Taliban-controlled areas. In 1998 television sets, videocassette recorders, videocassettes, audiocassettes, and satellite dishes were outlawed in order to enforce the prohibition. However, subsequent reports indicate that many persons in urban areas around the country own such electronic devices despite the ban.

The parts of the country's educational system that have survived more than 20 years of war place considerable emphasis on religion. According to international news reports in May 2001, the Taliban issued an edict requiring all students, including those in private schools, to wear head coverings. The Taliban reportedly ordered education centers to expel any student without a head covering or face the risk of closure by the religious police.

When the Taliban took Kabul in September 1996, it immediately issued pronouncements forbidding girls to go to school. According to a United Nations survey, at that time, more than 100,000 girls reportedly attended public school in Kabul from grades kindergarten to 12. Since 1996 the Taliban has eliminated most of the opportunities for girls' education that existed in areas that the Taliban now controls; however, some girls' schools still operate in rural areas and small towns. The Taliban decreed that women are not allowed to attend the country's formerly coeducational universities, and one women's university, the Kabul branch of the Peshawar-based Afghan University, was closed by the Taliban in 1996 after it gained control of Kabul. The Taliban closed more than 100 NGO-funded girls' schools and home-based women's vocational projects in Kabul in June 1998. The Taliban stated that schools would not be allowed to teach girls over the age of 8, and that the schools that were closed had violated this rule. In the future, the Taliban stated that girls' schools would be licensed, and that teaching in such schools would be lim-

ited to the Koran. However, the Taliban reportedly does not enforce this policy universally and Taliban officials reportedly tolerate informal home schools in various parts of the country. Several girls' schools reportedly remain open in Kandahar. However, with the exception of schools in the refugee camps, which are maintained by international NGO's, girls' schools remained closed in Herat, which was captured by the Taliban in 1995. Some families sent girls abroad for education in order to evade the Taliban's prohibitions on education for females in most urban areas. The ban on women working outside of the home reportedly also has hampered the education of boys, since 70 percent of the country's teachers were women before the Taliban took over most of the country.

In 1998 the Taliban announced that foreign Muslim women, including U.N. workers, would be allowed to perform their jobs only if accompanied by a male relative. Although the restriction was not enforced vigorously during the period covered by this report, some arrests were reported and the regulation disrupted the working environment for some international NGO's in the country. On July 6, 2000, the Taliban issued an edict banning women's employment (except in the health care sector) in U.N. agencies and international NGO's. On August 16, 2000, the Taliban issued an order closing down the World Food Program's (WFP) 25 widows' bakeries. However, the Taliban reversed the edict the next day after the WFP stated that the female staff of the bakeries were not direct employees of the WFP and therefore not subject to the edict. In June 2001, the bakeries were again closed due to an impasse between the Taliban and the WFP over the WFP's attempt to hire women to conduct a beneficiary survey. A compromise was reached in which the Taliban permitted the WFP to hire women through the Ministry of Public Health and allowed the bakeries to reopen.

While some Taliban leaders have claimed that the Taliban is tolerant of religious minorities, it reportedly has imposed some restrictions upon Shi'a Muslims in Taliban-controlled territory. For example, the Taliban allegedly orders Shi'a Muslims to confine their Ashura commemorations during the month of Muharram to their mosques and to avoid the public processions that are an integral part of Ashura in other countries with Shi'a populations. There also are unconfirmed reports that the Taliban has occupied and "cleansed" Shi'a mosques for the use of Sunnis, including a Shi'a mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998.

The Taliban reportedly has required parents to give their children "Islamic" names.

Prayer is mandatory for all, and those who are observed not praying at appointed times or who are late attending prayer are subject to punishment, including severe beatings. There were reports in 1998 that PVPV members in Kabul stopped persons on the street and demanded that they recite various Koranic prayers in order to determine the extent of their religious knowledge.

According to Taliban regulations, men's beards must protrude farther than would a fist clamped at the base of the chin. Men also must wear head coverings and may not have long hair. A man who has shaved or cut his beard may be imprisoned for 10 days and be required to undergo Islamic instruction. All students at Kabul University reportedly are required to have beards in order to study there (no female students are allowed).

At various times, the Taliban has banned certain traditional recreational activities, such as kite flying and playing chess, on religious grounds. Dolls, stuffed animals, and photographs are prohibited under the Taliban's interpretation of religious injunctions against representations of living beings; in search of these objects, Taliban soldiers or persons masquerading as Taliban members reportedly have entered private homes without prior notification or informed consent. Health care for both men and women was hampered by the ban on images of humans, which caused the destruction of public education posters and hampered the provision and dissemination of health information in a society plagued with massive illiteracy. However, the Taliban allowed the visual depiction of persons in demining educational materials.

In public, women are required to don a head-to-toe garment known as the burqa, which has only a mesh screen for vision. Most women in rural areas traditionally wore burqas; however, many urban women did not wear burqas before the Taliban imposed this practice. According to a decree announced by the religious police in 1997, women found outside the home who were not covered properly would be punished severely, along with their family elders. Women are not allowed to wear white burqas, white socks, or white shoes. Women reportedly are beaten if their shoe heels click when they walk. All of these restrictions apparently are not enforced strictly upon the nomad population of several hundred thousand or upon the few female foreigners, who nonetheless must cover their hair, arms, and legs. Women in their homes also must not be visible from the street; the Taliban requires that houses

with female occupants have their windows painted over. However, during the period covered by this report, the Taliban reportedly eased some of the restrictions on women's dress.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In the recent past, the Taliban committed mass killings of the mainly Shi'a Hazaras in newly occupied territories, particularly in the north. Although the conflict between the Hazaras and the Taliban is political and military as well as religious, and it is not possible to state with certainty that the Taliban engaged in its campaign of persecution against the Shi'a solely because of their religious beliefs, the religious affiliation of the Hazaras reportedly is a significant factor leading to their repression by the Taliban.

Since it took control of Kabul in 1996, the Taliban reportedly has committed numerous human rights violations, particularly against the Hazaras. In January 2001, several NGO's reported that the Taliban massacred several hundred Shi'a civilians in Yakaolang in the center of the country. The massacre reportedly occurred after the Taliban recaptured the area from opposition forces. According to witnesses interviewed by HRW, after the Taliban recaptured the area, they rounded up victims from the surrounding villages, and shot or stabbed them with bayonets in the town center.

There were credible reports of the massacre of thousands of civilians and prisoners by the Taliban during and after the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998; this massacre reportedly was aimed at ethnic Hazaras. In September 1998, approximately 500 persons were killed as the Taliban gained control of the city of Bamiyan. The Hazaras regained control of Bamiyan in April 1999 following prolonged guerilla-style warfare; however, the Taliban recaptured Bamiyan in May 1999 and reportedly killed a number of Shi'a residents.

There were reports during 1999 and 2000 that there were forced expulsions of ethnic Hazaras and Tajiks from areas controlled or conquered by the Taliban, as well as harassment of these minorities throughout Taliban-controlled areas.

In March 2001, the Taliban destroyed two giant pre-Islamic Buddha statues carved into cliffs in Bamiyan province, on the grounds that statues are idolatrous and insulting to Islam. The Taliban destroyed the 2,000-year-old statues despite appeals from the United Nations, international NGO's, and the world community, including many Muslim countries.

The Taliban ruled strictly in areas that it controlled, establishing ad hoc and rudimentary judicial systems. The Taliban established Islamic courts to judge criminal cases and to resolve disputes. The courts reportedly dealt with all complaints, relying on the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law and punishments as well as tribal customs. In cases involving murder and rape, convicted prisoners generally were ordered to be executed, although relatives of the victim could instead choose to accept other restitution. Decisions of the courts reportedly were final. Taliban courts imposed their extreme interpretation of Islamic law and punishments following swift summary trials. Murderers were subjected to public executions, which sometimes took place before crowds of up to 30,000 persons at Kabul Stadium. Executions sometimes were carried out by throat slitting, a punishment that, at times, was inflicted by the victims' families. Thieves were subjected to public amputations of either one hand or one foot, or both. The U.N. Special Rapporteur for Torture noted particular concern about the use of amputation as a form of punishment by Taliban authorities. Adulterers were stoned to death or publicly whipped with 100 lashes. According to HRW in 1999, several men who were found guilty of homosexual acts were crushed by having walls toppled over them by a tank; one man who survived the ordeal after being left under the rubble for two hours reportedly was allowed to go free. There were no reports that homosexuals were punished in such a manner during the period covered by this report.

The Taliban seeks to impose its extreme interpretation of Islamic observance in areas that it controlled and has declared that all Muslims in areas under its control must abide by the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law. The Taliban announces its proclamations and edicts through broadcasts on the Taliban's "Radio Shariat," and relies on a religious police force under the control of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice to enforce rules regarding appearance, dress, employment, access to medical care, behavior, religious practice, and freedom of expression. Members of the PVPV, which was raised to the status of a Ministry in May 1998, are supposed to regularly check persons on the street in order to ascertain that individuals are conforming to such Taliban edicts. Persons found to be in violation of the edicts are subject to punishment meted out on the spot, which may include beatings, detention, or both. In practice, the rigid policies adopted both by the Taliban and by certain opposition groups affects adversely adherents of other

forms of Islam and of other faiths. Enforcement of Taliban social strictures is erratic; Taliban edicts generally are enforced in cities, especially in Kabul, and are enforced less consistently in rural areas, where more is left to local custom.

The Taliban's extreme interpretation and implementation of Shari'a (Islamic law) has had a particularly harmful effect on women. In Kabul and elsewhere, women found in public who are not wearing a burqa, or whose burqas do not cover their ankles properly, frequently are beaten by members of the religious police. Some poor women cannot afford the cost of a burqa, and thus are forced to remain at home or risk beatings if they go out without one. Some women who cannot afford to buy burqas have been unable to access necessary medical care. In a 1998 survey, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) found that 22 percent of the female respondents surveyed reported being detained and abused by the Taliban; of these incidents, 72 percent were related to alleged infractions of the Taliban's dress code for women. Most of these incidents reportedly resulted in detentions that lasted 1 hour or less, but 84 percent also resulted in public beatings, and 2 percent resulted in torture. Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed reported that they had reduced their public activities drastically during 1998 in Kabul.

Women were expected to leave their homes only while escorted by a male relative, further curtailing the appearance and movement of women in public even when wearing approved clothing. Women who appear in public without a male relative risk being beaten by members of the religious police. Women are not allowed to drive, and taxi drivers reportedly are beaten if they take unescorted women as passengers. According to Amnesty International (AI), on October 19, 2000, a Taliban-controlled radio station reported that the Taliban confiscated 12 taxis for 3 days and warned drivers that they should "seriously avoid taking and transporting women without male relatives." Women may ride only on buses designated as women's buses; there are reportedly not enough of these buses to meet the demand, and the wait for women's buses can be lengthy. In 1998 the Taliban ordered that bus drivers who take female passengers must encase the bus in curtains, and put up a curtain so that the female passengers cannot see or be seen by the driver. Bus drivers also were told that they must employ boys under the age of 15 years to collect fares from female passengers, and that neither the drivers nor the fare collectors were to mingle with the passengers.

When the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, it immediately issued pronouncements forbidding women to work, including female doctors and nurses in hospitals. In a few cases, the Taliban has allowed women to work in health care occupations under restricted circumstances. Amnesty International reported that thousands of women around the country were laid off in April 2000. The prohibition on women working outside of the home has been especially difficult for the large numbers of widows left by over 20 years of civil war; there are an estimated 30,000 widows in Kabul alone. Many women reportedly have been reduced to selling all of their possessions and to begging to feed their families. Taliban gender restrictions also continued to interfere with the delivery of humanitarian assistance to women and girls. Male relatives also must obtain the permission of the PVPV for female home-based employment.

Restrictions on women's employment also affected women working in international NGO's. In June 2001, the religious police arrested four female employees of the World Food Program because they were not accompanied by a male family member. The women were released after spending 2 nights in jail. Also in June 2001, an Italian-funded hospital in Kabul was forced to close temporarily to protect female staff from local religious police.

While most citizens lack any access to adequate medical facilities, such access was made even more restrictive for women under Taliban rule. In 1997 the Taliban announced a policy of segregating men and women in hospitals and directed most hospitals in Kabul to cease services to women and to discharge female staff. This policy contributed to a drastic reduction in access to and quality of health care for women. Several orders concerning the provision of emergency and nonemergency medical aid for women were given and reversed in 1997. In June 1998, the Taliban prohibited all doctors from treating female patients in the absence of a patient's husband, father, or brother. This decree, while not universally enforced, makes treatment extremely difficult for Kabul's widows, many of whom have lost all of their male family members. Furthermore, even when a woman is allowed to be treated by a male doctor, he may not see or touch her, which significantly limits the possibility of any meaningful treatment.

The Taliban's restrictions on medical treatment by male health professionals have had a detrimental effect on children. According to PHR, children sometimes are denied medical care when the authorities do not let male doctors visit children's

wards, which may be located within the women's ward of a hospital, or do not allow male doctors to see children who are accompanied only by their mothers.

No information is available on the numbers of religious detainees or prisoners. There is no indication that religious detainees or prisoners are charged formally as part of their incarceration. However, the Taliban reportedly still holds many Hazara Shi'a prisoners, who were detained as a result of the country's civil war and not solely on the basis of their religion.

Very little information is available about territory held by the Northern Alliance, which controls much less territory than the Taliban and therefore affects a smaller percentage of the population. However, some groups within the Northern Alliance also are dedicated to enforcing strict adherence to Shari'a law. In past years, some members of the Northern Alliance were responsible for atrocities against Taliban forces during the war for control of the country.

The Ismaili community fought for the Northern Alliance against the Taliban and suffered when the Taliban occupied territories once held by Ismaili forces.

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 any faction's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the different branches of Islam in the country are difficult. Historically, the minority Shi'a faced discrimination from the majority Sunni population. Most Shi'a Muslims are members of the Hazara ethnic group, which traditionally has been segregated from the rest of society. Throughout the country's history, there have been many examples of conflicts between the Hazaras and other citizens. These conflicts often have had economic and political roots but also have acquired religious dimensions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul has been closed since 1989 for security reasons. The U.S. Government maintains contact with all factions but does not recognize any as the Government of Afghanistan. U.S. officials have raised religious freedom issues with representatives of the factions, including the Taliban, on several occasions and particularly have called for the protection of the rights of religious minorities. U.S. officials have made similar approaches to other governments regarding the behavior of the Taliban, including countries with influence in the country.

The Department of State has raised the issue of Taliban abuses committed against religious minorities in international forums and has voted in favor of U.N. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions criticizing abuses committed against Shi'a by the Taliban. In August 2000, the Department of State announced that it was doubling its refugee resettlement ceiling for the Near East and South Asian regions for the year 2000, in part to allow more Afghan women and their families into the United States. Following reports of the Taliban's destruction of the pre-Islamic statues in Bamiyan, the Department of State spokesman criticized strongly the action. In the preceding weeks, following reports of the Taliban's plan to destroy statues, the U.S. Government made efforts in conjunction with private institutions, other countries and international organizations to deter the destruction. Following reports of the Taliban's edict requiring Hindus to wear identifying badges, the Department of State spokesman criticized the proposed edict and reaffirmed the Department's concerns about similar abuses.

In September 2000, the former Secretary of State identified the Taliban as a particularly severe violator of religious freedom.

BANGLADESH

The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion but also stipulates the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government generally respects this provision in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Citizens generally are free to practice the religion of their choice; however, police, who generally are ineffective in upholding law and order, often are slow to assist members of religious minorities who have been victims of crimes.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, some members of the Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities continue to perceive and experience discrimination from the Muslim majority.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The total land area of the country is approximately 53,000 square miles, and the population is approximately 130 million. Sunni Muslims constitute 88 percent of the population. About 10 percent of the population are Hindu. The remainder are mainly Christian (mostly Catholic) and Buddhist. Members of these faiths are found predominantly in the tribal (non-Bengali) populations of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, although many other indigenous groups in various parts of the country are Christian as well. There also are small populations of Shi'a Muslims, Sikhs, Baha'is, animists, and Ahmadis. Estimates of their populations vary widely, from a few hundred up to 100,000 adherents for each faith. Religion is an important part of community identity for citizens, including those who do not participate actively in religious prayers or services; atheism is extremely rare.

There are no reliable estimates of the number of missionaries active in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion but provides for the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government generally respects this provision in practice.

Religious organizations are not required to register with the Government; however, all nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), including religious organizations, are required to register with the NGO Affairs Bureau if they receive foreign financial assistance for social development projects. The Government has the authority to cancel the registration of an NGO or to take other action against it; however, it rarely has used these powers, and they have not affected NGO's having religious affiliations.

Family laws concerning marriage, divorce, and adoption differ slightly depending on the religion of the person involved. There are no legal restrictions on marriage between members of different faiths.

Religion exerts a powerful influence on politics, and the Government is sensitive to the Muslim consciousness of the majority of its citizens. Religion is taught in government schools, and parents have the right to have their children taught in their own religion. In practice schools with few religious minority students often work out arrangements with local churches or temples, which then direct religious studies outside school hours. The country celebrates holy days from the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian faiths as national holidays.

The Government puts no restrictions on the establishment of places of worship, the training of clergy, or the maintenance of links with coreligionists abroad.

In April 2001, the Director General of the Islamic Foundation, a government organization dedicated to promoting Islamic culture and studies, forced Maulana Obaidul Haque, Khatib (chief clergyman) of the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, to retire. The Director General appointed a new Khatib, but after Maulana Obaidul Haque filed a writ petition to protest his forced retirement, the court stayed the decision and he remains Khatib for the National Mosque. The case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In January 2001, the High Court ruled illegal all fatwas, or expert opinions on Islamic law. Fatwas can include the decision as to when a holiday is to begin based upon the sighting of the moon, or an opinion on a religious issue. Islam dictates that only those Muftis (religious scholars) who have expertise in Islamic law are authorized to declare a fatwa. However, in practice village religious leaders sometimes make declarations on individual cases, calling the declaration a fatwa. Sometimes this results in extrajudicial punishments, often against women for their perceived moral transgressions. While the court's intention was to end the extrajudicial enforcement of fatwas or other declarations by religious leaders, the January ruling declared all fatwas illegal. The High Court's January 2001 ruling resulted in violent public protests (see Section III). Several weeks later, the Appellate Court stayed the High Court's ruling.

On April 9, 2001, Parliament passed the Vested Property Return Bill of 2001. This law stipulates that land remaining under government control that was seized under the Vested Property Act of 1965 be returned to its original owners, provided that the original owners or their heirs remain resident citizens. Hindus who fled to India and resettled there will not be eligible to have their land returned, and no provisions were included for compensation for or return of properties that the Government has sold. The Government must publish a list of vested property holdings by October 11, 2001, and claims must be filed within 90 days of the publication date. No further claims are to be accepted.

Foreign missionaries may work in the country, but their right to proselytize is not protected in the Constitution, and foreign missionaries often face delays of several months in obtaining or renewing visas. In the past, some missionaries who were perceived to be converting Muslims to other faiths were subsequently unable to renew their visas, which must be renewed annually.

There are no financial penalties imposed on the basis of religious beliefs; however, religious minorities are disadvantaged in practice in such areas as access to jobs in government or the military, and political office. The Government has appointed some Hindus to senior civil service positions, and some recent promotion lists from the Ministry of the Establishment included from 3 to 7 percent Hindus and other minorities. However, religious minorities remain underrepresented in government jobs, especially at the higher levels of the civil and foreign services. The government-owned Bangladesh Bank employs about 10 percent non-Muslims in its upper ranks. Hindus dominate the teaching profession, particularly at the high school and university levels. Some Hindus report that Muslims tend to favor Hindus in some professions, for example, doctors, lawyers, and accountants. They attribute this to the education that the British offered during the 19th century, which Muslims boycotted but Hindus embraced. Employees are not required to disclose their religion, but religion generally can be determined by a person's name.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On June 3, 2001, in Baniachar, Gopalganj district, a bomb exploded inside a Catholic church during Sunday Mass, killing 10 persons and injuring 20 others. The army arrived to investigate approximately 10 hours after the blast. The bomb, which the army concluded was produced outside of the country, had been placed just inside a side door in a jute bag. Police detained various persons for questioning, but by the end of the period covered by this report, no progress had been made on the case.

In prior years, the Government sometimes has failed to criticize, investigate, and prosecute the perpetrators of attacks on members of religious minorities. For example, the Government responded ineffectively after an April 1998 attack on a Catholic school in Dhaka. When workers started demolishing a dilapidated classroom building on the school's property, someone from a mosque located behind the building shouted repeatedly over the mosque's loudspeaker, "The Christians are tearing down the mosque." A mob then attacked the school, demolishing walls, breaking statues, burning a large cross, and ransacking dormitories while students, most of whom were Muslim, stayed in a locked room. No one was hurt. Policemen stood by and watched as the attack continued throughout the afternoon.

A court later ruled clearly that the disputed classroom building belonged to the school, which produced documents demonstrating ownership for the last 80 years; however, the leaders of the mosque continued to harass school officials. Subsequently the Archbishop instructed the school officials to surrender the land and the building to the mosque management committee members in order to maintain peace.

Under the 1961 Muslim Family Ordinance, female heirs inherit less than male relatives do, and wives have fewer divorce rights than husbands. Men are permitted to have up to four wives, although society strongly discourages polygamy and it rarely is practiced. Laws provide some protection for women against arbitrary divorce and the taking of additional wives by husbands without the first wife's consent, but the protections generally apply only to registered marriages. Marriages in rural areas sometimes are not registered because of ignorance of the law. Under the law, a Muslim husband is required to pay his ex-wife alimony for only 3 months, but this rarely is enforced.

Feminist author Taslima Nasreen, whose latest book was banned in 1999, remained abroad during the period covered by this report, after receiving bail while criminal and civil cases against her for insulting religious beliefs remain pending. There have been no new developments in these cases.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the religious communities generally are amicable. Persons who practice different religions often join each others' festivals and celebrations, such as weddings. Shi'a Muslims practice their faith without interference from Sunnis. Nevertheless, clashes between religious groups occasionally occur. In recent years, there have been cases of violence directed against the religious minority communities that have resulted in the loss of lives and property. Police, who generally are ineffective in upholding law and order, often are slow to assist in such cases (see Section II). In the past, intercommunal violence caused many Hindus to emigrate to India, but recent emigration of Hindus has decreased significantly and generally can be attributed to economic or family reasons. Some incidents of communal violence still occur.

On October 5, 2000, in Narsingdi, two extortionists demanded approximately \$175 (10,000 Taka) from Hindus during a religious festival. When the Hindus refused, the two damaged the deity and its platform and beat the caretaker. On June 11, 2001, the two criminals were fined approximately \$88 (5,000 Taka) and sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment under the Public Safety Act.

On October 6, 2000, in Gazipur, two boys and one woman were injured in an altercation between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims conducting Friday prayers asked Hindus to lower the music volume at a nearby Hindu festival. When the Hindus refused, Muslims from the mosque damaged a Hindu deity, leading to the violence and injuries. This altercation was resolved through dialog between community leaders.

On October 8, 2000, in Dinajpur, four Muslims set fire to a Hindu temple over a land dispute with the Hindu temple's manager.

In the past, members of the Ahmadi sect, whom many mainstream Muslims consider heretical, were the target of attacks and harassment. In 1999 several mosques belonging to the sect were attacked. On October 8, 1999, a bomb killed six Ahmadis who were attending Friday prayers at their mosque in Khulna. The only suspect questioned by police was a fellow Ahmadi who later was released. No other suspects have been questioned, and the case remains unresolved. In November 1999, Sunni Muslims ransacked an Ahmadi mosque near Natore, in the western part of the country. In subsequent clashes between Ahmadis and Sunnis, 35 persons were injured. Ahmadis regained control of their mosque and filed a criminal case against 30 persons allegedly responsible for the conflict. That case remains pending. After a January 1999 attack on an Ahmadi mosque in Kushtia, two police officials were disciplined for failing to discharge their duties in controlling the incident. Ahmadi leaders report that their mosque remains under the control of local police, and Ahmadis are unable to worship there more than 2 years after the original attack.

Public reaction to the High Court's January 2001 ruling that declared fatwas to be illegal resulted in violence. Following the court's decision, a number of NGO's organized a rally in Dhaka and transported busloads of persons, mostly women, from all parts of the country to express support for the ruling, which they said was a victory for women and for all who suffered abuses in the name of fatwa. However, Muslim groups contended that fatwa was an integral part of a Muslim's daily life and called the ruling an attack on their religious freedom. Islamic groups organized blockades to prevent buses from entering Dhaka for the rally, and protested the ruling and the NGO rally. In the ensuing violence, a police officer was killed inside a mosque, and an NGO office was ransacked.

Some members of the Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities continue to perceive and experience discrimination from the Muslim majority.

The law permits citizens to proselytize; however, strong social resistance to conversion from Islam means that most missionary efforts by Christian groups are aimed at serving communities that have been Christian for several generations or longer.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains a dialog with government, religious, and minority community representatives to promote religious freedom and to discuss problems. On an informal basis, the Embassy also has assisted some U.S. Christian-affiliated relief organizations in guiding paperwork for schools and other projects through gov-

ernment channels. The Government has been receptive to discussion of such subjects and generally helpful in resolving problems.

BHUTAN

The law provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government limits this right in practice. The Drukpa discipline of the Kagyupa school, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, is the state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The law prohibits religious conversions and citizens of other faiths may not proselytize. The Government restricts the import into the country of printed religious matter; only Buddhist religious texts are allowed to enter.

Societal pressure for conformity with Drukpa Kagyupa norms is prevalent.

There are no formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Bhutan; however, the U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government informally in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 18,146 square miles. Population figures vary greatly and estimates range from 600,000 to 2 million. Dissidents living outside of the country contend that the Government underreports the number of ethnic Nepalese in the country. Approximately two-thirds of the declared population practice either Drukpa Kagyupa or Ningmapa Buddhism. The Drukpa discipline is practiced predominantly in the western and central parts of the country, although there are adherents in other parts of the country. The inhabitants of the western and central parts of the country mainly, but not exclusively, are ethnic Ngalops, the descendants of Tibetan immigrants who predominate in government and the civil service and whose cultural norms and dress have been declared by the monarchy to be the standard for all citizens.

The Ningmapa school of Mahayana Buddhism is practiced predominantly in the eastern part of the country, although there are adherents in other parts of the country, including the royal family. Most of those living in the east are ethnic Sharchops, the descendants of those thought to be the country's original inhabitants. Several Sharchops hold high positions in the Government, the National Assembly, and the court system.

There is a tradition of respect among many citizens for the teachings of an animist and shamanistic faith called Bon; the arrival of this faith to the country predates that of Buddhism. Bon priests still can be found in the country, but it is unclear how many citizens adhere to this faith. Bon rituals sometimes are included in the observance of Buddhist festivals.

Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, are present in small numbers throughout the country. There is only one Christian church building in the country, in the south, where the only concentration of Christians sufficiently large to sustain a church building is located. Elsewhere families and individuals practice their religion at home.

Approximately one-third of the population, ethnic Nepalese who live mainly in the south, practice Hinduism. The Shaivite, Vaishnavite, Shakta, Ghanapath, Paurinic, and Vedic schools are represented among Hindus.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The law provides for freedom of religion; however the Government limits this right in practice. The Drukpa discipline of the Kagyupa school, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, is the state religion, and the law prohibits religious conversions.

Religious communities must secure government licenses before constructing new places of worship, but there were no reports to suggest that this process was not impartial. The Government provides financial assistance for the construction of Drukpa Kagyupa and Ningmapa Buddhist temples and shrines. Monks and monasteries of the Ningmapa school also receive some state funding. In the early 1990's, the Government provided funds for the construction of new Hindu temples and centers of Sanskrit and Hindu learning and for the renovation of existing temples and

places of learning. The Government also provides some scholarships for Sanskrit studies in Hindu universities in India.

The Government subsidizes monasteries and shrines of the Drukpa discipline and provides aid to approximately one-third of the Kingdom's 12,000 monks. By statute 10 seats in the 150-seat National Assembly, and 2 seats on the 11-member Royal Advisory Council, are reserved for monks of the Drukpa discipline.

The King has declared major Hindu festivals to be national holidays, and the royal family participates in them.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The law prohibits religious conversions.

Citizens of other faiths other than Drukpa Kagyupa Buddhism may not proselytize. Foreign missionaries also are not permitted to proselytize. However, international Christian relief organizations and Jesuit priests are active in education and humanitarian activities.

According to dissidents living outside of the country, Buddhist religious teaching, of both the Drukpa Kagyupa and the Ningmapa disciplines, is permitted in schools; however, the teaching of other religious traditions is not.

The Government restricts the import into the country of printed religious matter; only Buddhist religious texts are allowed to enter.

The passports of members of minority religions cite the holder's religion, and applicants for government services sometimes are asked their religion before services are rendered. All government civil servants, regardless of religion, are required to take an oath of allegiance to the King, the country, and the people. The oath does not have religious content, but a Buddhist lama administers it.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There have been reports in the past that police have used unwarranted lethal force on peaceful demonstrations, resulting in the death of at least one monk. Monks also reportedly have been tortured while in prison.

Ethnic Nepalese in the country were subject to discrimination by the authorities in the late 1980's and early 1990's when many were driven from their homes and forcibly expelled from the country. The root causes of this official discrimination and the expulsions were cultural, economic, and political; however, to the degree that their Hinduism identified them as members of the ethnic Nepalese minority, religion was also a factor. The Government contends that many of those expelled in 1991 were illegal immigrants who had no right to citizenship or residency in the country. Some 98,000 ethnic Nepalese continue to live in refugee camps in eastern Nepal and are seeking to return to their homes in Bhutan.

In March 2001, the long-negotiated Nepal-Bhutan joint verification team (JVT) began working on the first of the refugee camps to determine which refugees would be considered genuine Bhutanese and eventually allowed to return home. The process has "verified" over 400 families; however, the JVT has announced no results and no timetable for doing so. No plans for repatriation of the verified Bhutanese have been made public.

The Government also began a program of resettling Buddhist citizens from other parts of the country on land in the south vacated by the expelled ethnic Nepalese now living in refugee camps in Nepal. Human rights groups maintain that this action prejudices any eventual negotiated return of the refugees to Bhutan. The Government maintains that this is not its first resettlement program and that citizens who are ethnic Nepalese from the south sometimes are resettled on land in other parts of the country. The motivation for this official discrimination appears to be economic and political; however, to the degree that the Hinduism of the ethnic Nepalese identifies them, religion is also a factor.

A National Assembly resolution adopted in 1997 prohibits still-resident immediate family members of ethnic Nepalese refugees from holding jobs with the Government or the armed forces. In early 1998 the Government implemented the resolution, and already had dismissed 429 civil servants by November 1998, when implementation of the resolution was discontinued. While the ethnic Nepalese retired in this fashion were mainly Hindu, and the Government and the majority of the society are generally Buddhist, the motivation for this official discrimination appears to be mainly economic and political in nature and does not appear to be related to the practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Governmental discrimination against ethnic Nepalese in the late 1980's and early 1990's arose in part from a desire to preserve the country's Buddhist culture from the growth of the ethnic Nepalese population, with its different cultural and religious traditions. That preoccupation on the part of the Government and many Buddhists still is present today. It is reflected in official and societal efforts to impose the dress and cultural norms of the Ngalop ethnic group on all citizens. While there are no known reports of the repetition of the excesses of the late 1980's and early 1990's, societal and governmental pressure for conformity with Drukpa Kagyupa norms is prevalent. The failure of the Government to permit the return of ethnic Nepalese refugees has tended to reinforce societal prejudices against this group, as has the Government's policy on forced retirement of refugee family members in government service and the resettlement of Buddhists on land vacated by expelled ethnic Nepalese in the south.

There have been some efforts at promoting interfaith understanding. There are regular exchanges between monks of the two schools of Buddhism represented in the country. The King's example of making Hindu festivals official holidays and observing them also has had a positive impact on citizens' attitudes.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

There are no formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Bhutan. Informal contacts between the two governments ranging from the level of cabinet secretary to that of embassy officer occasionally take place. During these exchanges, governmental discrimination against the ethnic Nepalese minority has been discussed. The issue of religious freedom has not been raised explicitly.

INDIA

The Constitution provides for secular government and the protection of religious freedom, and the central Government generally respects these provisions in practice; however, it sometimes does not act effectively to counter societal attacks against religious minorities and attempts by state and local governments to limit religious freedom. This failure results in part from the legal constraints inherent in the country's federal structure, and in part from the law enforcement and justice systems, which are at times ineffective. The ineffective investigation and prosecution of attacks on religious minorities is interpreted by some extremist elements as a signal that such violence is likely to go unpunished.

There was no overall change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report. India is a secular state in which all faiths generally enjoy freedom of worship. Central government policy does not favor any religious group; however, governments at state and local levels only partially respect religious freedom, and a number of such governments considered legislation during the period covered by this report that would limit religious freedom. In addition, in May 2001, the central Government banned Deendar Anjuman, a Muslim group. The central Government is led by a coalition called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which has pledged to respect the country's traditions of secular government and religious tolerance. However, the leading party in the coalition is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party with links to Hindu extremist groups that have been implicated in violent acts against Christians and Muslims. The BJP also leads state governments in Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. Human rights groups and others have suggested that the authorities in these states have not responded adequately to acts of violence against religious minorities by Hindu extremist groups, due at least in part to the links between these groups and the BJP, and have noted that the ineffective investigation and prosecution of such incidents may encourage violent actions by extremist groups.

Tensions between Muslims and Hindus, and increasingly, between Hindus and Christians, continued. During the period covered by this report, attacks on religious minorities occurred in several states. During the summer of 2000, in particular, there were a number of attacks on Christians.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Relevant statistical information from the 2001 census had not been released by the end of the period covered by this report. According to the latest government estimates, Hindus constitute an estimated 82.4 percent of the population, Muslims 12.7 percent, Christians 2.4 percent, Sikhs 2.0 percent, Buddhists 0.7 percent, Jains 0.4 percent, and others, including Parsis (Zoroastrians), Jews, and Baha'is, 0.4 percent. Hinduism has a large number of branches, including the Sanatan and Arya Samaj groups. Slightly over 90 percent of Muslims are Sunni; the rest are Shi'a. Buddhists include followers of the Mahayana and Hinayana schools, and there are both Catholic and Protestant Christians. Tribal groups (members of indigenous groups historically outside the caste system), which in government statistics generally are included among Hindus, often practice traditional indigenous religions. Hindus and Muslims are spread throughout the country, although large Muslim populations are found in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, and Muslims are a majority in Jammu and Kashmir. Christian concentrations are found in the northeastern states, as well as in the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Goa. Three small northeastern states have large Christian majorities—Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. Sikhs are a majority in the state of Punjab. In January 1999, the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) recommended that Hindus be declared minorities in six states—Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland—in order to help the NCM to recognize the problems of Hindus in those states. At the end of the period covered by this report, the proposal still was under consideration.

There are a number of immigrants, primarily from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, who practice various religions. Immigrants from Bangladesh usually reside near the border area.

According to the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India, there are approximately 1,100 registered foreign missionaries in the country; in 1993 there were 1,923 (see Section II).

Over the years, one of the reasons lower castes and Dalits (formerly called "untouchables"—see Section II) have converted to other faiths is that they viewed conversion as a means to achieve higher social status. However, lower caste and Dalit converts continue to be viewed by both their coreligionists and by Hindus through the prism of caste. Converts are regarded widely as belonging to the caste of their ancestors, and caste identity, whether or not acknowledged by a person's own religion, has an impact on marriage prospects, social status, and economic opportunity.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the central Government generally respects this right in practice; however, state and local governments only partially respect this freedom. There are no registration requirements for religions. Legally mandated benefits are assigned to certain groups, including some groups defined by their religion. The Government is empowered to ban a religious organization if it has provoked intercommunity friction, has been involved in terrorism or sedition, or has violated the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, which restricts funding from abroad. In May 2001, the Government officially banned Deendar Anjuman, a Muslim group.

There are many religions and a large variety of denominations, groups, and subgroups in the country, but Hinduism is the dominant religion. Under the Constitution, the Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh faiths are considered different from the Hindu religion, but the Constitution often is interpreted as defining Hinduism to include those faiths. This interpretation has been a contentious issue, particularly for the Sikh community.

The legal system accommodates minority religions' personal status laws; there are different personal status laws for different religious communities. Religion-specific laws pertain in matters of marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. For example, Muslim personal status law governs many noncriminal matters involving Muslims, including family law, inheritance, and divorce. Hindu groups such as the RSS are pushing for a uniform civil code that would treat members of all religions alike. The personal status laws of the religious communities sometimes discriminate against women. For example, Christian divorce law discriminates in favor of the husband.

Some major religious holidays celebrated by various groups are considered national holidays, including Christmas (Christian), Eid (Muslim), Guru Nanak's Birthday (Sikh), and Holi (Hindu) all are national holidays.

The Government permits private religious schools, which can offer religious instruction, but does not permit religious instruction in government schools. Some Hindus believe that this disadvantages them since Muslims have many private religious schools (madrassas), but Hindus mostly attend government or Christian schools. Many Christian schools avoid overt religious instruction to avoid retaliation from Hindu extremists.

In June 2000, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) ordered affected states to provide written reports detailing the violence against Christians and the actions taken by state governments. All the states submitted reports to the NHRC, which found no organized pattern of anti-Christian activity. Another official inquiry by the NCM into the roughly 400 attacks on Christians between December 1998 and December 2000, only found random acts of unconnected violence, rather than a pattern of religiously motivated hate crimes. The Sangh Parivar (which forms part of the Government's support base), interpreted this conclusion as exculpation. However, the Archbishop of Delhi spoke on behalf of Catholics to voice his great disappointment with the Commission's report. Many Christian leaders are unhappy with the single Christian member on the NCM, who they believe is not representative of their views. Local church leaders opposed a proposed visit by the NCM to Ahmedabad to investigate violence against Christians for that reason.

The central Government is conscious of the perception that because of the composition of its support base it is less likely to respond to acts of violence against religious minorities by Hindu extremist groups, and has made efforts to show that it is addressing the concerns of religious minorities who believe that they are threatened. In the period covered by this report, the Prime Minister met on several occasions with delegations from the Christian and Muslim communities to discuss their particular concerns.

The Government has taken steps to promote interfaith understanding, including the creation of the National Integration Council in 1962 as a non-statutory body with an objective of maintaining social tranquility and communal harmony. The NCM and the NHRC have appointed members and are tasked respectively with protecting the rights of minorities and protecting human rights. These governmental bodies investigate allegations of discrimination and bias, and can make recommendations to the relevant local or central government authorities. These recommendations generally are followed, although the recommendations do not have the force of law.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On May 3, 2001, the Government officially banned Deendar Anjuman, a Muslim group, for "fomenting communal tension" and actions "prejudicial to India's security." State prosecutors alleged that some members of the tiny Muslim group called Deendar Channabasaveshwara Siddique (DCS) and its parent organization, Deendar Anjuman, were responsible for the Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh church bombings in 2000 (see Section III). From July to August 2000, approximately 45 members of the organization were taken into custody in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in connection with the bombings. During this time, the Government claimed that Deendar Anjuman was involved in a complicated plot to destabilize the country's communal relations, thus justifying its ban; however, of the group's few thousand members, probably only a few were involved in terrorist activities. The fact that a Muslim group was responsible for the bombings of Christian churches was unusual; most attacks against Christians are perpetrated by Hindu extremist groups or by mobs. Some observers have compared the vigorous investigation and prosecution of Deendar members for attacks against Christians with the general lack of vigor in the investigation and prosecution of Hindus accused of carrying out attacks against Christians.

The Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act makes it an offense to use any religious site for political purposes or to use temples for harboring persons accused or convicted of crimes. While specifically designed to deal with Sikh places of worship in Punjab, the law applies to all religious sites. The state of Uttar Pradesh passed the "Religious Buildings and Places Bill" during the state assembly budget session from March to May 2000. The bill requires a permit endorsed by the state government before construction of any religious building can begin in the state. The bill's supporters say that its aim is to curb the use of Muslim institutions by Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups, but the measure has become a controversial political issue among religious groups in the northern part of the country. Most religious groups from all of the communities oppose the restriction on building

religious structures and view it as an infringement upon religious freedom. In West Bengal, legislation implemented in early 2000 requires any person who plans to construct a place of worship to seek permission from the district magistrate; anyone intending to convert a personal place of worship into a public one also requires the district magistrate's permission.

There is no national law that bars a citizen or foreigner from professing or propagating his or her religious beliefs; however, speaking publicly against other beliefs is considered dangerous to public order and is prohibited. Given this context, the Government discourages foreign missionaries from entering the country and has a policy of expelling foreigners who perform missionary work without the correct visa. Long-established foreign missionaries generally can renew their visas, but since the mid-1960's the Government has refused to admit new resident foreign missionaries.

New missionaries currently enter as tourists on short-term visas. In November 2000, the Home Ministry ordered a family of American Christian missionaries based in Tamil Nadu to leave the country because their business/tourist visas were incompatible with their work in the country. In addition to foreign missionaries, several Christian relief organizations have been hampered by bureaucratic obstacles in getting visas renewed for foreign relief work. Missionaries and foreign religious organizations must comply with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, which restricts the ability of certain NGO's, including religiously affiliated groups, to finance their activities with overseas assistance.

Government officials also allegedly subjected Christian-affiliated foreign relief organizations to arbitrary bureaucratic obstacles; many of these organizations are not engaged in religious activity. Human rights and religious groups that receive funding from overseas must apply to the Home Ministry for a permit in order to receive such funds. The process appears to be easier for Hindu organizations than for Christian organizations.

The BJP, which has led two coalition national governments since March 1998, is one of a number of offshoots of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, an organization that espouses a return to Hindu values and cultural norms. Members of the BJP, the RSS, and other affiliated organizations (collectively known as the Sangh Parivar) have been implicated in incidents of violence and discrimination against Christians and Muslims. The BJP and RSS express respect and tolerance for other religions; however, the RSS in particular opposes conversions from Hinduism and believes that all citizens should adhere to Hindu cultural values. The BJP officially agrees that the caste system should be eradicated, but many of its members are ambivalent about this. Most BJP leaders, including Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Home Minister L.K. Advani, also are RSS members, as are the chief ministers of the state governments in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Goa, and Himachal Pradesh. The BJP's traditional cultural agenda has included calls for construction of a new Hindu temple to replace an ancient Hindu temple that was believed to have stood on the site of a mosque in Ayodhya that was destroyed by a Hindu mob in 1992; for the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution, which grants special rights to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the country's only Muslim majority state; and for the enactment of a uniform civil code that would apply to members of all religions. In mid-October 2000, the RSS held a 3-day rally in Agra, which more than 75,000 Hindus reportedly attended. Speaking at the rally, RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan created controversy when he called for a ban on foreign churches and the creation of a national Christian Church based on the Chinese model. Sudarshan reportedly also encouraged Christian citizens to free themselves from the strong influence of foreign countries by setting up Indian nationalistic churches. Of particular concern for minority groups was Home Minister L.K. Advani's highly publicized participation at the Agra rally and vocal support of the RSS on his return to New Delhi. All of these proposals are opposed strongly by some minority religious groups. The BJP-led national Government took no steps to adopt these controversial proposals.

The BJP does not include the above RSS goals in the program of the coalition Government it leads; however, some Christian groups have noted that the coming to power of the BJP coincided with an increase in complaints of discrimination against minority religious communities. These groups also claim that BJP officials at state and local levels have become increasingly unresponsive in investigating charges of religious discrimination and in prosecuting those persons responsible.

The degree to which the BJP's nationalist Hindu agenda has affected the country with respect to religious minorities varies depending on the region. State governments continue to attach a high priority to maintaining law and order and monitoring intercommunity relations at the district level. Thus, the central Government often is not the most important player in determining the character of relationships of various religious communities between each other and with the state.

In general, religious minorities in the northern area of the country claim that the regional governments' attitudes toward their communities have deteriorated since the BJP assumed power in 1998, and are concerned that attacks on religious minorities no longer appear to be confined to Gujarat and Orissa. In the north, sporadic attacks against Christians that began in April 2000 continued into the summer of 2000. The Government dispatched the NCM to investigate the attacks in the north, but the NCM's findings that the attacks were not "communal in nature" led to widespread criticism in the minority community. There is strong evidence that the NCM report misrepresented the victims by claiming that the victims were entirely satisfied that there was no religious motivation behind the violence; in fact, Christian groups in the north believe that these incidents were religiously motivated. Victims of the incidents claim that the local police were not responsive either before or during the attacks. By the end of the period covered by this report, no arrests had been made.

The eastern part of the country presented a varied picture with regard to religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Sporadic attacks continued but were not concentrated in one geographical area. The political leanings of the state governments in the eastern region did not appear to correlate with their level of protection for religious freedom. In Orissa, which has been known for violence against religious minorities (particularly after the murders of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young children there in January 1999), the communal situation remained relatively unchanged during the period covered by this report, despite the installation of a BJP-Biju Janata Dal (BJD) government in February 2000. The Orissa government in November 2000 notified churches that religious conversions could not occur without the local police and district magistrate being notified in order to give permission; however, this does not appear to have been enforced. The Orissa Freedom of Religion Act of 1967 contains a provision requiring a monthly report from the state on the number of conversions; district officials are required to keep such records. After a conversion has been reported to the district magistrate, the report is forwarded to the authorities, and a local police officer conducts an inquiry. The police officer can recommend in favor of or against the intended conversion, and is often the sole arbitrator on the individual's right to freedom of religion; if conversion is judged to have occurred without permission from the district magistrate or with coercion, the authorities may take penal action. There were no reports that the district magistrate denied permission for any conversions.

The four southern states are ruled by political parties with strong secular and pro-minority views. Each of these parties—the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh, and the Congress Party in Kerala and Karnataka—has a history of support for religious minorities and has attempted to assuage religious minority fears about religious tension in the rest of the country. After the DMK (the former ruling party of Tamil Nadu) and the TDP entered the NDA in cooperation with the BJP during the 1999 Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) elections, both parties made efforts to reaffirm their commitment to secularism and to allay apprehensions from their religious minority supporters.

The southern branches of the BJP generally take a more moderate position on minority issues; however, religious groups in the region still allege that since the BJP's rise to power in the national Government, some local officials have begun to enforce laws selectively to the detriment of religious minorities. The groups cite numerous examples of discrimination, such as biased interpretations of postal regulations, including removal of postal subsidies; refusals to allocate land for the building of churches; and heightened scrutiny of NGO's to ensure that foreign contributions are made according to the law.

In the west, Gujarat continued to experience incidents of intercommunity strife in which Hindu nationalist groups targeted Christians and Muslims. While Muslim and Christian leaders in Gujarat maintain that overt incidents of discrimination or violence against minority religions declined slightly during the period covered by this report, Christian and Muslim communities remain suspicious of the state government, the only non-alliance BJP government in the country. However, the state government generally remained even-handed in its treatment of minorities. The Christmas festival in the southern Dangs district was peaceful. (In 1998 Hindus attacked Christians during Christmas, and in 1999 Christmas was peaceful but tense as Hindu nationalist groups held demonstrations.) In Maharashtra, Hindu-Muslim violence increased during the period covered by this report (see Section III), but again there was no evidence that the state government was favoring one community over another. In Madhya Pradesh, intercommunity strife is relatively uncommon. In April 2001, the state's Chief Minister Digvijay Singh strongly stated that his gov-

ernment would deal equally strictly with any violence committed by either Hindu or Muslim fundamentalist groups. There were no incidents of intercommunity strife in the new state of Chhattisgarh during the period covered by this report. Religious communities generally live together harmoniously in Goa, despite one incident of intra-Christian strife during the period covered by this report (see Section III).

Some persons alleged that the state of Gujarat discriminated in distributing aid to victims of the January 26, 2001 earthquake in Kutch district, which left over 20,000 persons dead. In April 2001, Human Rights Watch toured the affected region and claimed that in the distribution of relief supplies upper caste Hindus received better treatment than lower caste Hindus and poor Muslims in the worst affected towns of Bhuj, Bhachau, and Anjar. However, representatives of many NGO's working in the region reported that the Gujarat government's relief effort did not discriminate by caste or religion. (There are almost no Christians in the quake-stricken region.)

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The personal status laws of the religious communities sometimes discriminate against women. Under Islamic law, a Muslim husband may divorce his wife spontaneously and unilaterally; there is no such provision for women. Islamic law also allows a man to have up to four wives but prohibits polyandry. Under the Indian Divorce Act of 1869, a Christian woman may demand divorce only in the case of spousal abuse and certain categories of adultery; for a Christian man, a wife's adultery alone is sufficient.

The Government is reviewing the legislation on marriage. A draft "Christian Marriage Bill" considered in early 2000 was intended to replace the Indian Divorce Act of 1869, which is criticized widely as biased against women. If enacted, the draft bill would place limitations on interfaith marriages and specify penalties, such as 10 years imprisonment, for clergymen who contravene its provisions. The current form of the proposed bill states that no marriage in which one party is a non-Christian may be celebrated in a church. The bill was not introduced during the Parliament session of March to May 2000 due to the strong objections and reservations of the Christian community. Christian leaders continued to oppose the bill when the Government proposed to introduce it in late November 2000, this time objecting that the bill did not go far enough in its efforts to equalize the treatment of women. The bill was on the agenda of the February 2001 Budget session, but was never brought to the floor for debate.

Jammu and Kashmir, the country's only Muslim majority state, has been the focus of repeated armed conflict between India and Pakistan, and internally between security forces and Muslim militants who demand that the state be given independence or ceded to Pakistan. Particularly since an organized insurgency erupted in Jammu and Kashmir in 1989, there have been numerous reports of human rights abuses by security forces and local officials against the Muslim population, including execution-style killings, beatings, and other forms of physical abuse. Many of the charges of government responsibility for massacres of civilians lack credibility; however, significant evidence emerged in August 1999 regarding the Government's earlier role in the killing of 19 Muslims in Saalan village of Poonch district on August 4, 1998. An investigation by the chief minister revealed that the state and federal governments had created an overall infrastructure that specifically included individuals with the demonstrated capacity and attitude to commit such acts of violence. It is difficult to separate religion and politics in Kashmir; Kashmiri separatists are exclusively Muslim, and almost all the higher ranks as well as most of the lower ranks in the Indian forces stationed there are non-Muslims.

On June 10, 2000, in Uttar Pradesh, Vijay Ekka, a witness to the killing of a Catholic priest, George Kuzhikandum, died in police custody. Ekka initially was placed under police protection because of the risk of Hindu reprisals against him. Human rights organizations and minority communities across the country criticized his death. Archbishop Vincent Concessao of Agra said that Ekka's body showed signs of torture, and that police had told church authorities that Ekka had committed suicide. While in detention, Ekka told visitors that he was being tortured constantly in police custody, and said that he was afraid that the police would kill him. The state government initiated an investigation into Ekka's death on June 17, 2000, and a few days later announced plans to establish a judicial inquiry. The Mathura superintendent of police was transferred, and two policemen were arrested in connection with the incident. By the end of the period covered by this report, the trial against the two police was continuing; another eyewitness in the case had registered a complaint with the NHRC regarding harassment by the local police.

The Government is led by a coalition called the National Democratic Alliance, which has pledged to respect the country's traditions of secular government and reli-

gious tolerance. However, the leading party in the coalition is the Bharatiya Janata Party, a Hindu nationalist party with links to Hindu extremist groups that have been implicated in violent acts against Christians and Muslims. The BJP also leads state governments in Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. Human rights groups and others have suggested that the response by authorities in these states to acts of violence against religious minorities by Hindu extremist groups has been less than optimal, at least in part because of the links between these groups and the BJP, and have noted that the ineffective investigation and prosecution of such incidents may encourage violent actions by extremist groups.

The BJP has been inconsistent and perhaps is not united in its approach to violence against Christians. In July 2000, the BJP urged the Government to investigate a series of small, nonlethal bomb blasts in churches in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh for which Hindu extremist groups were being blamed, but subsequently resisted efforts to widen the investigation to cover other attacks on Christians. Governments at state and local levels only partially respect religious freedom. A number of such governments considered legislation during the period covered by this report that would limit religious freedom.

On occasion, Hindu-Muslim violence led to killings and a cycle of retaliation (see Section III). In some instances, police and government officials abetted the violence, and at times security forces were responsible for abuses. Police sometimes assisted Hindu fundamentalists in committing violent acts. In August 2000, after a Hindu-Muslim clash in Surat, Gujarat, Muslims alleged that the state reserve police sided with the attackers rather than with the victims (see Section III). The NHRC reportedly sought an explanation from the Gujarat government about this incident; however, the Gujarat government stated that it never received an official complaint from the NHRC. Following riots in Ahmedabad, Gujarat from August 5 to 7, 2000 (see Section III), some police officers allegedly forced some Muslim residents to sing the Sanskrit anthem to prove that they were not "antinational."

Weak enforcement of laws protecting religious freedom is partly due to an overburdened and corrupt judiciary. The legal system as a whole has many years of backlog, and all but the most prominent cases move slowly. Official failure to deal adequately with intragroup and intergroup conflict and with local disturbances has in some places practically abridged the right to religious freedom. A federal political system in which state governments hold jurisdiction over law and order problems contributed to the Government's ineffectiveness in combating religiously based violence. The country's only national law enforcement agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), is required to ask state government permission before investigating a crime in the affected state. States often delay or refuse to grant such permission.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no credible 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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, the central and state governments achieved some successes in prosecuting perpetrators of religiously based violence. In May 2001, the Jhabua district court in Madhya Pradesh sentenced 10 Hindu men to life in prison for the September 1998 attack and rape of 6 Christian nuns at a convent in Navapada, an incident that had caused nationwide outrage.

The trial of Dara Singh, alleged ringleader of the mob responsible for the Staines murders (see Section III), is being prosecuted by the CBI rather than local prosecutors. Under the CBI's efforts, the trial appears to be making progress. Singh has been denied bail, and witnesses are beginning to testify to his involvement. This trial is expected to be a bellwether for the minority community in assessing the central Government's commitment to convicting persons who commit crimes of religious hatred.

On July 14, 2000, the Maharashtra government announced its intention to prosecute Bal Thackeray, leader of the rightwing Hindu organization Shiv Sena, for his role in inciting the Mumbai 1992-93 riots in which over 700 persons, the vast majority of whom were Muslim, were killed. On July 25, 2000, the authorities arrested Thackeray; a few hours later a judge ruled that the statute of limitations relating to the incitement charges had expired, and Thackeray was released. There has been some progress in the investigation of the 1992-93 riots. The Maharashtra government claims that the special investigative task force almost has completed its inves-

tigation of 31 police officers indicted by the Shri Krishna Commission. By the end of the period covered by this report, 15 officers had been arrested, but all were released on anticipatory bail.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Animosities within and between the country's religious communities have roots that are centuries old, and these tensions—at times exacerbated by poverty, class, and ethnic differences—have erupted into periodic violence throughout the country's 54-year history. The Government makes some effort, not always successfully, to prevent these incidents and to restore communal harmony when they do occur (see Section II); however, tensions between Muslims and Hindus, and increasingly, between Hindus and Christians, continue to pose a challenge to the concepts of secularism, tolerance, and diversity on which the State was founded.

Within the Indian context, the phrase “communal violence” generally is understood to mean Hindu-Muslim conflict and the possibility of retaliation and serious riots. As a minority of 130 million persons in the country, Muslims are less vulnerable than the much smaller Christian minority of 25 million persons. Communalism among the larger religious groups within the country is so sensitive that domestic newspapers refer to communal clashes between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs without naming the groups involved in order to avoid exacerbating tensions. For example, an April 2001 article in the national newspaper, *The Times of India*, described a clash between “two communities,” and did not mention which communities were involved. In contrast, coverage of violence against Christians does not avoid naming the religious affiliation of the victims or perpetrators. This may be because Christians are such a tiny minority in all but a few areas of the country that they are considered to be less likely to engage in retaliatory violence.

Although a Home Ministry report released on April 26, 2001, admitted that there had been “an increase in attacks on Christians and their institutions in the year 2000,” the report went on to claim that communal violence as a whole had declined by 9 percent. The outbreak of societal violence against Christians that occurred during the previous reporting period, and apparently was sparked by rumors of forced conversions of Hindus to Christianity, was not repeated during the period covered by this report. However, tensions persist, and the underlying resentment of Christians by Hindus sometimes leads to violent confrontations.

During the period covered by this report, attacks on religious minorities occurred in several states. The summer of 2000, in particular, saw a number of attacks on Christians. Some of these attacks were motivated by economic motives or arose in a context of existing nonreligious disputes; others were purely religious in motivation.

In July 2000, a tribal Jesuit priest was killed while riding home on his motorcycle in South Bihar. In this case, both the Catholic mission and the police agreed that the motive was robbery. In Gujarat, a local Bajrang Dal activist assaulted a priest and a nun. The victims had been involved in distributing food to drought victims and were accused of using the aid as inducement to poor Hindus to convert. In the attack 144 sacks of grain were looted.

On July 29, 2000, in Andhra Pradesh, a gang attacked and killed a Lutheran bishop. The motive later was found to be intrachurch political rivalry; the bishop's opponents had hired the killers.

On July 21, 2000, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu nationalist group, beat Samson Christian, a member of the All India Christian Council. Christian had been active in trying to protect tribal Christians against attacks through the courts. A few days earlier, in the same area, alleged VHP members had attacked staff members at a Christian school. In this case, the attackers claimed that they were angry over alleged attempts at conversion in the school, although school authorities said that the incident stemmed from a dispute with a parent over nonpayment of school fees.

Throughout June and July 2000, there were several bomb explosions in or near Christian institutions in the southern states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. No one was killed in the explosions, which caused relatively minor damage. The blasts later were blamed on Deendar Anjuman activists. Members of the group were taken into custody and the Government later banned the group (see Section II). These incidents, as well as the killing of a principal at a Christian school near Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, led to heated debates in Parliament during which opposition members accused the Government of failing to rein in the radical elements of the Sangh Parivar (see Section II).

During the rest of the period covered by this report, there were periodic outbreaks of religiously based violence but there was no distinct geographic or temporal pattern.

In August 2000, in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, a mob beat up a priest for distributing Christian literature. In September 2000, a Catholic Church in Karnataka was vandalized. In late November 2000, in Surat district, Gujarat, a Hindu mob vandalized a small church (converted house) in Chindhia village of Vyara Tehsil. The owner of the church land, which is in a tribal area, was a tribal convert to Christianity, who reportedly willingly reconverted to Hinduism and supported the vandals in reconsecrating the building for Hindu worship. The Bishop of the Evangelical Church of India, a small Protestant denomination, was refused an audience with the Chief Minister of Gujarat to discuss this case. The Chief Minister and Gujarat authorities considered the case a conflict over conversion and land, and not a religiously motivated attack on Christians. The lower (tehsil level) court ruled in favor of the Christian group, but the district court ruled in favor of the Hindu group's possession of the premises. The Christian group appealed the decision to the Gujarat high court (the next higher court).

In early December 2000, a Catholic priest was killed in Manipur. Earlier in Kurpania, Bihar, a nun was raped and a convent was looted.

In January 2001, in a village near Udaipur, Rajasthan, Bajrang Dal activists allegedly beat two Christian missionaries and their followers because they were watching a film on the life of Christ. Both missionaries were attempting to convert local tribals.

In late January 2001, in the Sarguja district of Chhattisgarh, there was a mass reconversion of 360 tribals back to Hinduism, which was managed by a Sangh Parivar offshoot and attended by local Congress Party leaders and a BJP member of Parliament (see Section II).

On March 26, 2001, a group of Hindus reportedly beat two members of an Indian Evangelical Team while travelling in Orissa.

In March 2001, in Orissa, Christian Archbishop Cheenath gave a speech objecting to an amendment to the Orissa Religious Freedom Act which he believed would make conversion more difficult. He said that fears of forced conversion were not credible. He noted that, although Christian schools have for generations educated a far larger percentage of Indians than there are Christians in the general population, Christians make up slightly less of the population today than they did in the 1991 census.

In May 2001, at the Banavali village of Salcete Tehsil in South Goa, a Christian priest named Satirino Antao tried to sell a disputed school property to a splinter Christian group calling themselves the "Believers." The majority of the school's parents were Catholics who opposed the move. Reportedly, on May 20, 2001, after a heated meeting, the parents vandalized school property and on May 28, 2001, allegedly assaulted Father Antao. The Archbishop's office claimed that Antao had been removed as priest of Banavali church in 1973 and had no right to sell the school because it belongs to the Catholic Church. At the end of the period covered by this report, the case against Antao remained in the Goa High Court.

On May 28, 2001, in Kapadwanj in Kheda district in Gujarat, members of the VHP stopped a funeral procession to prevent the burial of a Christian in a disputed burial ground. The police used tear gas to dispel the VHP members, but the body had to be moved to Ahmedabad for burial.

Christian missionaries have been operating schools and medical clinics for many years in tribal areas. Tribals (who have no caste status) and Dalits (who are at the lowest end of the caste system) occupy the very lowest position in the social hierarchy. However, they have made socioeconomic gains as a result of the missionary schools and other institutions, which, among other things, have increased literacy among low-caste and non-caste persons. Some higher-caste Hindus resent these gains. They blame missionaries for the resulting disturbance in the traditional Hindu social order as better educated Dalits, tribals, and members of the lower castes no longer accept their disadvantaged status as readily as they once did. Some Hindu groups fear that Christians may try to convert large numbers of lower-caste Hindus, using economic or social-welfare incentives. Upper caste Hindus, (the basis of the BJP and RSS), are afraid that this may destroy the rigid caste hierarchy that benefits from them. Many acts of violence against Christians stem from these fears.

In December 2000, a Christian school near Ranchi in Jharkand state decided to close after a series of attacks, including assaults and an alleged rape, against teachers and staff. The police blamed a local criminal gang for the assaults, and arrested four persons. One policeman was suspended for dereliction of duty.

On March 23, 2001, alleged BJP and RSS activists attacked a Christian congregation at Chevalla in Andhra Pradesh. The alleged reason behind the attacks was the pervasive perception that Christians were encouraging conversions of Hindus.

In late March, 2001, some Christian leaders, believing that violence against Christians had declined significantly since the summer of 2000, agreed among themselves to meet with leaders of Hindu organizations. Under the aegis of the NCM, talks were proposed to discuss conversions, the issue of a “swadeshi” (i.e. indigenous) church, and attacks on Christians. However, by the end of the period covered by this report, such talks had not begun, as neither Christians nor Hindus had been able to reach agreement on their respective positions.

On May 7, 2001, a Christian priest, Father Jaideep, was attacked in Jatni town, Orissa. Local citizens who were enraged by the priest’s distribution of pamphlets to propagate Christianity in a Hindu-dominated area allegedly participated in the attack.

During the period covered by this report, the RSS angered minority communities by publicly challenging the “Indian-ness” of religious minorities. On December 31, 2001, RSS chief K. Sudarshan addressed a meeting of volunteers of the Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh (a global organization of expatriate Hindus) in a suburb of Mumbai. He said that only the RSS can serve as the bulwark against what he claimed was the Catholic Church’s agenda of converting large Asian populations.

On March 8, 2001, Sudarshan again made a speech advocating the “Indianization” of Islam and Christianity. He said that “they should sever their links with the Mecca and the Pope and instead become swadeshi.” Catholics took special exception to this; the Archbishop of Delhi pointed out that the Indian Christian church is 2,000 years old (traditionally dating from the Apostle Thomas), and that although the spiritual head was the Pope, the day-to-day administration of the church was entirely in Indian hands. The RSS published an article entitled “Foreign Missionaries, Quit India: RSS” in their journal *The Organiser*, in which they attacked missionary-backed Christian institutions in the country.

Citizens often refer to schools, hospitals, and other institutions as “missionary” even when they are owned and run entirely by indigenous Christian citizens. By using the adjective “missionary,” the RSS taps into a longstanding fear of foreign religious domination.

Christian leaders detected a slight decrease in the incidents of violence against their community, and also a change in the type of incidents. In late April, 2001, Father Donald DeSouza of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India said that while the incidents of violence against the Christian community had decreased in the previous 6 to 8 months, “that does not mean that the threat perception has also decreased” among Christians. The Government found that 80 percent of attacks on minorities were motivated by local incidents, economic arguments, or intradenominational feuds.

By the end of the period covered by this report, the trial continued in Orissa of Dara Singh, a member of the Hindu extremist Bajrang Dal, who was arrested on January 31, 2000, for the Staines murders (see Section II). In October 2000, a 13-year-old member of the mob responsible for the murders was sentenced to 14 years in prison. The trial of the other 14 arrested persons still was proceeding by the end of the period covered by this report. In May 2001, a witness in the trial identified Dara Singh as the person who put straw under Staines’s car and set it on fire. Previously, witnesses had been unwilling to identify Dara Singh.

In Christian majority areas, Christians sometimes are the oppressors. In Tripura, there were several cases of harassment of non-Christians by Christian members of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), a militant tribal group with an evangelical bent. For example, NLFT tribal insurgents have prohibited Hindu and Muslim festivals in areas that they control, cautioned women not to wear traditional Hindu tribal attire, and prohibited indigenous forms of worship. In Assam, where the population is increasing rapidly, the issue of Bangladeshi migrants (who generally are Muslim) has become very sensitive among the Assamese (predominantly Hindu) population, which considers itself to be increasingly outnumbered.

The country’s caste system generates severe tensions due to disparities in social status, economic opportunity, and, occasionally, labor rights. These tensions frequently have led to or exacerbated violent confrontations and human rights abuses. However, intercaste violence generally does not have a significant religious component.

The country’s caste system historically has strong ties to Hinduism. Hinduism delineates clear social strata, assigning highly structured religious, cultural, and social roles, privileges, and restrictions to each caste and subcaste. Members of each caste—and frequently each subcaste—are expected to fulfill a specific set of duties (known as *dharma*) in order to secure elevation to a higher caste through rebirth.

Dalits are viewed by many Hindus as separate from or “below” the caste system; nonetheless, they too are expected to follow their dharma if they hope to achieve caste in a future life. Despite efforts by reform-minded modern leaders to eliminate the discriminatory aspects of caste, societal, political, and economic pressures continue to ensure its widespread practice. Caste today therefore is as much a cultural and social phenomenon as a religious one.

The Constitution gives the President the authority to specify, in a schedule attached to the Constitution, historically disadvantaged castes, Dalits, and “tribals” (members of indigenous groups historically outside the caste system). These “scheduled” castes, Dalits, and tribes, are entitled to affirmative action and hiring quotas in employment, benefits from special development funds, and special training programs. The impact of reservations and quotas on society and on the groups they are designed to benefit is a subject of active debate within the country. Some contend that they have achieved the desired effect and should be modified, while others strongly argue that they should be continued, as the system has not addressed adequately the longterm discriminatory impact of caste. According to the 1991 census, scheduled castes, including Dalits, made up 16 percent and scheduled tribes made up 8 percent of the population.

Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs historically have rejected the concept of caste, despite the fact that most of them descended from low caste Hindu families and continue to suffer the same social and economic limitations of low caste Hindus. Low caste Hindus who convert to Christianity lose their eligibility for affirmative action programs. Those who become Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs do not, as the Constitution groups members of those faiths with Hindus and specifies that the Constitution shall not affect “the operation of any existing law or prevent the state from making any law providing for social welfare and reform” of these groups. In some states, there are government jobs reserved for Muslims of low caste descent.

Members of religious minorities and lower castes criticized the 2001 census as discriminating against them. They claim that they frequently were not allowed to register their correct caste status. Census results are used to apportion government jobs and higher education slots to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In February 2001, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India strongly criticized the census for “discriminating against weaker sections of society” by maintaining that Scheduled Castes may only be Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist. The National Council of Churches in India also protested the census. Despite the fact that Christianity does not recognize caste at all, Christian leaders recognize that society in general still does, and that the 50 percent of the country’s Christians who are of Dalit origin may be disadvantaged by not being allotted shares of jobs and places in education under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes provisions of the Constitution. Dalit converts to Christianity claim that societal discrimination against them on the basis of caste continues, even within the Christian community. One indicator of the continued slowness of economic and social upward mobility of Dalit Christians is that, of the 180 Catholic bishops in the entire country, only 5 are Dalits. Muslim Dalits, who account for most of the country’s 130 million Muslims, also were not counted as Dalits in the census. Muslim leaders have not protested the census issue vigorously, perhaps because they already benefit from more affirmative action programs at the state and central level.

In the past, Hindu-Muslim violence has led to killings and a cycle of retaliation. In some cases, local police and government officials abetted the violence, and at times security forces were responsible for abuses. Violence against Christians, at least outside of the northeast, rarely results in mass retaliation. However, between Hindu and Muslim communities, even rumors, supposed slights, or perceived insults can result in mass riots.

On August 1, 2000, news of a massacre of Hindu pilgrims to Amarnath by Kashmiri separatists spread through the country. In Gujarat, in the cities of Surat, Ahmedabad (see Section II), Palanpur, and Rajkot and in two villages in the Sabarkantha district, Khed Brahma and Modasa, angry Hindu mobs reacted by burning Muslim businesses. The fights that ensued left two Hindus and three Muslims dead and \$2.5 million (117.5 million rupees) of property damage. In Surat, Muslims alleged that the state reserve police sided with the attackers instead of the victims (see Section II).

In early September 2000, in the city of Nanded in Maharashtra, Hindu-Muslim violence broke out for 2 days after Muslims in a mosque allegedly threw stones at a Hindu religious procession during the annual Ganesh festival. Approximately 60 persons were injured. The Maharashtra government ordered a judicial inquiry; however, there were no reported results by the end of the period covered by this report. The local media observed a voluntary gag order to prevent the violence from spreading to other cities.

In late September 2000, during voting for city elections in Ahmedabad, a partisan clash with communal overtones developed into a riot. The police fired on the rioting mob, killing eight Muslims.

On October 16, 2000, a gang entered Tahira village, Siwan district, Bihar, and killed five members of a Muslim family. Police suspect that unknown persons in nearby Mohajirpur village committed the killings in retaliation for the killings of Hindu villagers a few days earlier. On December 3, 2000, a group of men in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, attacked and killed a Muslim preacher with crude bombs and sickles.

In November 2000, riots broke out between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims in Mubarakpur, Uttar Pradesh. The fighting was believed to have political as well as intra-Muslim doctrinal causes.

In December 2000, in the southern city of Ichalkaranji in Maharashtra, members of the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena party tried to perform "Maha-arti" (a Hindu prayer meeting) at a playground that traditionally has been used for Muslim Eid prayers. The police blocked the Shiv Sena effort, but riots and looting broke out in the city for 3 days. There were no deaths but property owned by both Hindus and Muslims was damaged. In early 2001, Hindu-Muslim tension increased after the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by Afghanistan's Taliban. Almost the entire country's religious community, including most prominent Muslims, strongly protested the Taliban's action; however, some radical Hindus exploited the issue. On March 5, 2001, Bajrang Dal activists allegedly burned a copy of the Koran in New Delhi. Using evidence consisting only of a photograph of three young men burning a Koran in an unidentifiable city, a commission of Muslim leaders asked to see the Prime Minister. Vajpayee met with them and promised action, and a police investigation resulted in two arrests. There was no further action by the end of the period covered by this report.

In the Maharashtra cities of Pune, Aurangabad, Nanded, and Nasik over the weekend of March 9 to 11, 2001, Muslims reacted to the alleged Koran burning in New Delhi by going on strike and burning Hindu property, government vehicles, and a police station in Pune. A radical Muslim student's organization, Student's Islamic Movement of India, had posted inflammatory posters about the incident. Mumbai police averted trouble by holding intercommunity meetings in sensitive areas of the city.

On March 21, 2001, in Amritsar, Punjab, members of a new, fringe Hindu extremist group burned a Koran and threw pig body parts inside a mosque in a clear attempt to enrage Muslims and start communal violence. A few days of riots, resulting in several deaths and extensive property damage, ensued in the northern cities of Amritsar, Kanpur and Baramulla. A similar Koran-burning in Patiala, Punjab, did not lead to major riots. The VHP accused "hostile elements" of trying to stir up communal tension.

Hindus and Muslims continue to feud over the existence of mosques constructed several centuries ago on three sites where Hindus believe that temples stood previously. The potential for renewed Hindu-Muslim violence remains considerable. Extremist Hindu groups such as the VHP and Bajrang Dal maintain that they intend to build a Hindu temple in Ayodhya on the site of a mosque demolished by a Hindu mob, with or without the Government's approval.

Throughout the period covered by this report, Jammu and Kashmir continued to be a focus of violence. Muslim Jihadists commit atrocities against Hindus, and the security forces often use excessive force to suppress them (see Section II). Civilians frequently are caught in the crossfire. Custodial killings of suspected militants, all of whom are Muslim, are common. Militants also carried out several execution-style mass killings of Hindu villagers and violently targeted Pandits (Hindu Kashmiris) in an attempt to force Hindus to emigrate.

There were a number of violent incidents in July and August 2000 that are believed to have been carried out by Muslim militants. On July 13, 2000, militants killed three Buddhist monks in Rangdum, Kargil district. On July 30, militants threw a grenade into a jeep carrying Hindu religious pilgrims near Gulmarg, killing one person and injuring five others. On August 1 to 2, militants entered a camp of Hindus making the annual pilgrimage to Amarnath in the northern part of the state and fired automatic weapons at tents, at the unarmed civilians in the camp, the pilgrims' local porters and guides, and at army personnel nearby. A total of 32 persons were killed in the attack, all of them unarmed civilians. Similar attacks occurred throughout the night of August 1 to 2, killing some 100 persons in various places in Jammu and Kashmir. On August 17, militants reportedly killed six Hindu villagers and seriously wounded seven others in Jammu. On August 18, militants entered a Hindu village in the Koteswara area near Rajauri and indiscriminately fired at villagers, killing four persons and injuring six others. On August 18, mili-

tants killed three elderly men and a teenage boy and wounded two other persons when they fired automatic guns at civilians in Ind village, Udhampur. On August 20, a person shot and injured a Hindu telephone kiosk operator in Qazi Gund, near Anantnag. Also on August 20, militants entered the Hindu village of Indeh, Udampur district and killed four members of a Hindu family.

In May 2001, six Hindu cattle herders in the mountains around Jammu were beheaded, apparently by Muslim militants. Attacks by Muslim separatists seeking to end Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir, and continued political violence, drove most Hindus in the Kashmir Valley to seek refuge in camps in Jammu, with relatives in New Delhi, or elsewhere.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, about 51,000 Pandit families fled their homes in Jammu and Kashmir due to the violence between 1990 and 1993. Of these, 4,674 families are living in refugee camps in Jammu, 235 families are in camps in Delhi, and 18 families are in Chandigarh. The rest still are displaced, but are living outside of the camps in Jammu and Delhi. The Pandit community criticizes bleak physical, educational, and economic conditions in the camps and fears that a negotiated solution giving greater autonomy to the Muslim majority might threaten its own survival in Jammu and Kashmir as a culturally and historically distinctive group. On August 18, 2000, the Jammu and Kashmir government adopted a proposal designed to facilitate the return of Pandits to the Kashmir valley and rehabilitation of the Pandits. However, various Pandit groups criticized the proposal for failing to address the political aspirations of Pandits, failing to provide economic support and adequate security for returning Pandits, and for creating special economic zones that would aggravate communal tensions. The proposal was abandoned during the period covered by this report, in large part due to the Government's inability to ensure the personal security of returnees. The NHRC released a report in June 1999 that stated that the crimes against the Pandits "fall short of the ultimate crime: genocide," but that compensation to the community had been inadequate. As a result, the Government's monthly subsistence payment to Pandit families was increased.

On February 3, 2001, two gunmen killed as many as six Sikhs and wounded at least four others in Srinagar. The public viewed this attack as punishment by militants for the killing earlier in the week of a Muslim civilian, allegedly by Sikh policemen belonging to Kashmir's Special Operations Group; however, such allegations never were proved. The Government sent a four-member team to Kashmir to investigate the killings; however, no one had been charged at the end of the period covered by this report. Sikhs protested the killings, which led to violent clashes with police. The February 2001 incident was the first attack against the Kashmir Valley's minority Sikh population since the March 2000 killing of 35 Sikh men in the village of Chatti Singhpora in south Kashmir. These mass killings in Kashmir, targeted against the Sikh community, increased fears that the remainder of Kashmir's beleaguered minorities may try or be forced to leave. There was an exodus of many from the Sikh community, particularly the young, during the period covered by this report.

There was no reported progress regarding any investigation of the March 2000 killings of 35 Sikh men in the village of Chatti Singhpora, near Anantnag in south Kashmir.

During the period covered by this report, in the temple town of Badrinath in Chamoli district, Uttar Pradesh, clashes reportedly occurred between Hindus and Jains over whether Jains should proceed with the installation in the building of the idol Shri Adinath, a principal Jain deity. Badrinath is a pilgrimage spot for Hindus.

Human Rights Watch reported that the practice of dedicating or marrying young, prepubescent girls to a Hindu deity or temple as "servants of god" or "Devadasis," reportedly continues in several southern states, including Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Devadasis, who generally are Dalits, may not marry. They must live apart from their families and are required to provide sexual services to priests and high caste Hindus. Reportedly, many eventually are sold to urban brothels. In 1992 the state of Karnataka passed the Karnataka Devadasi (Prohibition) Act and called for the rehabilitation of Devadasis, but this law reportedly is not enforced effectively and criminalizes the actions of Devadasis. Since Devadasis are by custom required to be sexually available to higher caste men, it reportedly is difficult for them to obtain justice from the legal system if they are raped by higher caste men.

Despite the incidents of violence and discrimination during the period covered by this report, relations between various religious groups generally are amicable among the substantial majority of citizens. There are efforts at ecumenical understanding that bring religious leaders together to defuse religious tensions. The annual Sarva Dharma Sammelan (All Religious Convention) and the frequently held Mushairas (Hindu-Urdu poetry sessions) are some events that help bring the various commu-

nities together. Prominent secularists of all religions make public efforts, to show respect for other religions by celebrating their holidays and attending social events such as weddings. Institutions such as the army consciously forge loyalties that transcend religion. After episodes of violence against Christians, Muslim groups have protested against the mistreatment of Christians by Hindu extremists, and during the period covered by this report, prominent Catholics spoke out against the killings of six Sikhs in Kashmir.

The VHP demanded a ban on the McDonald's food-chain in the country following news that an international lawyer was filing a lawsuit against the fast food company for allegedly misleading vegetarians by secretly lacing its french fries with beef tallow. VHP President Vishnu Hari Dalmia claimed that the religious sentiments of Hindus who revere cows in India and abroad had been hurt. In Mumbai, over 500 slogan-shouting Bajrang Dal activists ransacked McDonald's outlets in protest.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Mission continued to promote religious freedom through contact with the country's senior leadership, as well as with state and local officials. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates regularly meet with religious leaders and report on events and trends that affect religious freedom.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate officials meet with religious leaders to monitor religious freedom on a regular basis. During the period covered by this report, U.S. Embassy and consulate officials met with important leaders of all the significant minority communities. The NGO and missionary communities in the country are extremely active on questions of religious freedom, and mission officers meet with local NGO's regularly.

In December 2000, a U.S. Department of State official visited Delhi and Mumbai to meet with Hindu, Christian and Muslim leaders, human rights activists, and government officials about religious freedom problems in the country.

On the behest of the U.S. Embassy, the Indian Government extended a formal invitation to the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom to visit later in 2001.

MALDIVES

The 1997 Constitution designates Islam as the official state religion and the practice of other religions is prohibited by law. Foreigners are allowed to practice their religion if they do so in private and do not encourage citizens to participate.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and freedom of religion is restricted significantly. The President is the "supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam." The Government observes Shari'a (Islamic law), and significantly restricts the practice of other faiths.

Citizens regard Islam as one of their society's most distinctive characteristics and believe that it promotes harmony and national identity.

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident Embassy in the Maldives; the U.S. Ambassador in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is also accredited to the Government in Male. The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The Maldives is an archipelago consisting of approximately 1,200 coral atolls and islands scattered over 500 miles in the Indian Ocean southeast from India, and its population is approximately 280,000.

It is believed that the entire indigenous population is Muslim, the majority of which adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam. Foreigners in the Maldives—more than 300,000 tourists annually (predominantly Europeans and Japanese) and about 20,000 foreign workers (predominantly Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indian, and Bangladeshi)—are allowed to practice their religion privately.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Freedom of religion is restricted significantly. The 1997 Constitution designates Islam as the official state religion, and the Government interprets this provision to impose a requirement that citizens be Muslims. However, foreign residents are allowed to practice their religion if they do so privately and do not encourage citizens to participate.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In July 2000, the President stated that no other religion should be allowed in the country, and the Home Affairs Ministry announced special programs to safeguard and strengthen religious unity. The Government has established a Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs to provide guidance on religious matters. The Government also has set standards for individuals who conduct Friday services at mosques to ensure adequate theological qualifications.

The President must be a Sunni Muslim and under the Constitution is the “supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam.” Cabinet ministers also are required to be Sunni Muslims. Members of the People’s Majlis (Parliament) must be Muslim. The Government observes Shari’a (Islamic law).

There are no places of worship for adherents of other religions. The Government prohibits the importation of icons and religious statues but generally permits the importation of religious tracts, such as Bibles, for personal use.

The Government prohibits non-Muslim clergy and missionaries from proselytizing and conducting public worship services. Conversion of a Muslim to another faith is a violation of Shari’a and may result in a loss of the convert’s citizenship.

Islamic instruction is a mandatory part of the school curriculum, and the Government funds the salaries of instructors of Islam.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The law limits a citizen’s right to freedom of expression in order to protect “the basic tenets of Islam.”

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners during the period covered by this report.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Most citizens regard Islam as one of their society’s most distinctive characteristics and believe that it promotes harmony and national identity.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident embassy in the Maldives; the U.S. Ambassador in Colombo, Sri Lanka also is accredited to the Government in Male. The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

NEPAL

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and permits the practice of all religions; however, although the Government generally has not interfered with the practice of other religions, there are some restrictions. The Constitution describes Nepal as a “Hindu Kingdom,” although it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Converting or attempting to convert others is prohibited, and members of minority religions occasionally report police harassment. Isolated attacks, mainly by members of the local community on the country’s small Christian population, occurred during the period.

Adherents of the country’s many religions generally coexist peacefully and respect all places of worship. Those who convert to other religions may face isolated incidents of violence and sometimes are ostracized socially but generally do not fear to admit in public their affiliations.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Baha’i, and other religious groups.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 54,363 square miles, and its population is approximately 23.2 million. Hindus constitute 85 to 90 percent of the population; Buddhists, 5 to 10 percent; Muslims, 2 to 5 percent; and Christians, approximately 1.7 percent. Christian denominations are few but growing. Estimates put the number of Christians at about 400,000, and press reports indicate that 170 Christian churches operate in Kathmandu alone.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and permits the practice of all religions; however, although the Government generally has not interfered with the practice of other religions, there are some restrictions. The Constitution describes Nepal as a "Hindu Kingdom," although it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion.

For decades dozens of Christian missionary hospitals, welfare organizations, and schools have operated in the country. These organizations have not proselytized and have operated freely. Missionary schools are among the most respected institutions of secondary education in the country; many of the country's governing and business elite graduated from Jesuit high schools. Many foreign Christian organizations have direct ties to Nepali churches and sponsor Nepali pastors for religious training abroad.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The law prohibits converting others and proselytizing, activities that are punishable with fines or imprisonment. Some Christian groups are concerned that the ban on proselytizing limits the expression of non-Hindu religious belief.

A conviction for converting others or proselytizing can result in fines or imprisonment or, in the case of foreigners, expulsion from the country. Four cases related to converting others and/or proselytizing were filed during the period covered by this report. The courts dismissed two cases; one case resulted in a guilty verdict and a 3-month sentence for the four defendants, who have all since been released; and the fourth case is pending, with a court date set for October 2, 2001. However arrests or detentions for proselytizing are rare, and there have been few incidents of punishment or investigation in connection with conversion or proselytization during the last few years. In October 2000, four Christians, including one Norwegian national, were arrested on charges of attempting to convert others in Rajbiraj, Satpari district in eastern Nepal after a local teacher claimed that the four had offered him money if he converted. On November 9, two of the accused were released on bail after paying a fine. The other two, including the Norwegian, remained in custody awaiting trial. The district court eventually found all four guilty of proselytization and sentenced each to 3 months in prison. All four were released from jail on February 15, 2001. The Norwegian has since returned to his native country. Members of minority religions occasionally complain of police harassment.

The Government investigates reports of proselytizing. Nongovernmental groups or individuals are free to file charges of proselytizing against individuals or organizations. Such a case was filed with the Supreme Court in December 1999 by a private attorney against the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the United Missions to Nepal, an umbrella Protestant group. A court date to hear the case has been set for October 2, 2001. In April 2001, a case against the United Mission of Nepal (UMN) was filed with the Supreme Court by a member of the Pashupati Sena Nepal, a Hindu fundamentalist group. The Supreme Court dismissed the case the day after it was filed.

In 1999 Christian groups in Kathmandu were prevented from observing Good Friday in a public park when they failed to obtain the proper permit. However, Easter services in 1999, which were conducted without the proper permit, took place without incident. Public observances of Easter in a Kathmandu park and a Passover Seder in a major hotel in Kathmandu in 2000 and 2001 were uneventful.

The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste, except for traditional religious practices at Hindu temples, where, for example, members of the lowest caste are not permitted. The Press and Publications Act prohibits the publication of materials that create animosity among persons of different castes or religions.

There are currently no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Local authorities in Boudanath, Kathmandu, halted the performance of a traditional dance scheduled to be performed on February 26, 2001, during the 6-day celebration of the Tibetan New Year. Other activities that same day and the other 5 days of the festival continued as usual. In December 2000, police stopped a proces-

sion of Tibetan school children, monks, and others on their way to Swayambunath Temple in Kathmandu; however, no injuries were reported. After the June 1, 2001, death of members of the royal family, Tibetan community leaders were asked by local officials to refrain from public celebration of festivals during the period of official mourning.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The adherents of the country's many religions generally coexist peacefully and respect all places of worship. Most Hindus respect the many Buddhist shrines located throughout the country; Buddhists accord Hindu shrines the same respect. Buddha's birthplace is an important pilgrimage site, and Buddha's birthday is a national holiday. The country's Muslim minority is not well integrated with the larger Hindu majority and does not have the same level of religious identity that Hindu and Buddhist communities share.

Some Christian groups report that Hindu extremism has increased in recent years. Of particular concern are the Nepalese affiliates of the India-based Hindu political party Shiv Sena, locally known as Pashupati Sena, Shiv Sena Nepal, and Nepal Shivsena. Shiv Sena Nepal and Nepal Shivsena both strongly criticized the Taliban destruction of Buddhist artifacts in Afghanistan in March, as did many Nepali political and religious leaders. However, Nepal Shivsena threatened to break or destroy all "Islamic identities" in Nepal in retaliation for Taliban actions. Government policy does not support Hindu extremism, although some political figures have made public statements critical of Christian missionary activities. Some citizens are wary of proselytizing and conversion by Christians and view the growth of Christianity with concern.

Those who choose to convert to other religions, in particular Hindu citizens who convert to Islam or Christianity, sometimes are ostracized socially. Some reportedly have been forced to leave their villages. While this prejudice is not systematic, it can be vehement and occasionally violent. Hindus who convert to another religion may face isolated incidents of hostility or discrimination from Hindu extremist groups. Nevertheless, converts generally are not afraid to admit in public their new religious affiliations.

The caste system, although it is prohibited by the Constitution, strongly influences society. However, traditional religious practices at Hindu temples are an exception to this prohibition. The Government allows caste discrimination at Hindu temples where, for example, members of the lowest caste are not permitted (see Section II). Otherwise, the Government makes an effort to protect the rights of the disadvantaged castes.

In July 2000, some members of a predominantly Buddhist community in Gumda, Gorkha district vandalized the homes of six Christian converts. According to press reports, the six families were reintegrated into the community after agreeing not to kill animals or perform other activities contrary to the tenets of Buddhism during religious festivals. Two representatives of different Christian organizations have also alleged persecution of Christians and destruction of at least two churches by Maoist sympathizers.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Baha'i, and other religious groups. The Embassy monitors closely religious freedoms and raises these topics with the Government when appropriate.

PAKISTAN

The Constitution (which was suspended following the October 1999 coup) provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. Pakistan is an Islamic republic; Islam is the state religion. Islam also is a core element of the country's national ideology; the

country was created to be a homeland for Muslims. Religious freedom is “subject to law, public order, and morality;” accordingly, actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophet, for example, are not protected. In addition, the suspended Constitution requires that laws be consistent with Islam and imposes some elements of Koranic law on both Muslims and religious minorities.

There were no significant changes in the Government’s treatment of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. The Government fails in many respects to protect the rights of minorities. This is due both to public policy and to the Government’s unwillingness to take action against societal forces hostile to those that practice a different faith. Specific government policies that discriminate against religious minorities include: The use of the “Hudood” Ordinances, which apply different standards of evidence to Muslims and non-Muslims and to men and women for alleged violations of Islamic law; specific legal prohibitions against Ahmadis practicing their religion; and separate political electorates for minorities under the suspended Constitution. The number of cases filed under the “blasphemy laws” increased during the period covered by this report. A Christian nongovernmental organization (NGO) reported that 58 cases were registered during the period covered by this report, compared to 53 cases during the same period in 1999–2000. The Government of Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf, which took power in a military coup on October 12, 1999, reportedly made efforts to seek minority input into decision-making and offered cabinet positions to individuals from minority communities; however, such efforts tapered off during the period covered by this report.

Relations between different religious groups frequently are tense, and the number of deaths attributed to sectarian violence increased during the period covered by this report. Discriminatory religious legislation adds to an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which contributes to acts of violence directed against Muslim groups, as well as against Christians, Hindus, and members of Muslim offshoot groups, such as Ahmadis and Zikris. The Government does not encourage sectarian violence; however, there were instances in which the Government failed to intervene in cases of societal violence directed at minority religious groups. The lack of an adequate government response contributed to an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence and intimidation committed against religious minorities. Parties and groups with religious affiliations target minority groups.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 310,527 square miles and its population is approximately 140 million. According to the 1981 census (latest available figures), an estimated 95 percent of the population are Muslim; 1.56 percent are Christian; 1.51 percent are Hindu; and 0.26 percent are “other” (including Ahmadis). The majority of Muslims in the country are Sunni. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the Muslim population are Shi’a, and it is estimated that there are between 550,000 and 600,000 Ismailis (a recognized Shi’a Muslim group). Most Ismailis in the country are followers of the Aga Khan; however, an estimated 50,000 Ismailis known as Bohris are not. The Government conducted a census in 1998; however, the updated information is not yet available.

Religious minority groups believe that they are underrepresented in government census counts. Official and private estimates of their numbers can differ significantly. Current population estimates place the number of Christians at 3 million and the number of Ahmadis at 3 to 4 million. Current estimates for the remaining communities are less contested and place the total number of Hindus at 2.8 million; Parsis (Zoroastrians), Buddhists, and Sikhs at as high as 20,000 each; and Baha’is at 30,000. The “other” category also includes a few tribes whose members practice traditional indigenous religions and who normally do not declare themselves to be adherents of a specific religion, and those who do not wish to practice any religion but remain silent about the fact.

Punjab is the largest province in the country in terms of population. As is true for the country as a whole, Muslims are the largest religious group in Punjab. Although Christians live throughout the country, more than 90 percent of Christians reside in Punjab, making them the largest religious minority in the province. Approximately 60 percent of Punjab’s Christians live in villages. The largest group of Christians belongs to the Church of Pakistan, an umbrella Protestant group; the second largest group belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The rest are from different evangelical and church organizations.

Sindh and Baluchistan provinces also are overwhelmingly Muslim (approximately 97 percent). Christians and Hindus each are estimated to constitute slightly over 1 percent of the population in these provinces. The 2 provinces also have a few tribes that practice traditional indigenous religions and a small population (approximately 7,000 persons) of Parsis. The Ismailis are concentrated in Karachi and the northern areas. The tiny but influential Parsi community is concentrated in Karachi, although some live in Islamabad and Peshawar. According to local Christian sources, between 70,000 and 100,000 Christians and a few thousand Hindus live in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Christians constitute about 2 percent of Karachi's population. The Roman Catholic diocese of Karachi estimates that there are 120,000 Catholics in Karachi, 40,000 in the rest of Sindh, and 5,000 in Quetta, Baluchistan. Evangelical Christians have converted a few tribal Hindus of the lower castes from interior Sindh. Hindus are concentrated in Sindh and constitute 1 to 2 percent of the province's population. An estimated 100,000 Hindus live in Karachi. Ahmadis are concentrated in Punjab and in Sindh.

While Christianity frequently is seen as a "westernized" religion, it has a long history in the country. Some Christian communities trace their roots to the time of St. Thomas the Apostle. Most trace their origin to mid-19th century missionary movements in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Many Christians, in particular the recent converts, generally belong to the poorest socioeconomic groups. There are several long-established Baptist churches and, in Karachi, perhaps a dozen storefront Pentecostal and other evangelical churches.

No data are available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals (as opposed to mere membership). However, because religion is tied closely to a person's ethnic, social, and economic identity, there is less room for nominal, secular passivity with regard to religion. Most Muslim men offer prayers at least once a week at Friday prayers, and the vast majority of Muslim men and women pray at home or at the workplace during one or more of the five daily times of prayer. During the month of Ramazan, many of the otherwise less observant Muslims fast and attend mosque services more faithfully. About 70 percent of English-speaking Roman Catholics worship regularly; a much lower percentage of Urdu speakers do so.

The Shikaris (a hunting caste now mostly employed as trash collectors in urban Sindh) are converts to Islam, but eat foods forbidden by Islam.

Many varieties of Hinduism are practiced; the type practiced usually depends upon location and caste. Hindus have retained or absorbed many ancient traditional practices of Sindh. Hindu shrines are scattered throughout the country. Approximately 1,500 Hindu temples and shrines exist in Sindh and about 500 in Baluchistan. Most of the shrines and temples are tiny, no more than wayside shrines. During Hindu festivals, such as Divali and Holi, congregational attendance is much greater.

The Sikh community regularly holds ceremonial gatherings at sacred places in the Punjab. Prominent places of Sikh pilgrimage include Nanakana Sahib (where the founder of the Sikh religion Guru Nanak was born), Hasan Abdal (a shrine where an imprint of his hand is kept), and Andkartar Poora or Daira Baba Nanak Sahib in Sialkot District (where Guru Nanak is buried).

Parsis, who practice the Zoroastrian religion, have no regularly scheduled congregational services, except for a 10-day festival in August during which they celebrate the New Year and pray for the dead. All Parsis are expected to attend these services; most reportedly do. During the rest of the year, individuals offer prayers at Parsi temples. Parsis maintain a conscious creedal and ceremonial separation from other religions, preserving ancient rites and forbidding marriage to members of other religions. The Parsi community is self-sufficient in religious leaders, and there are no known Parsi missionaries operating in the country.

Only one group described by the authorities as a "foreign cult" reportedly has been established in the country. In Karachi members of the U.S.-based "Children of God" are rumored to be operating a commune where they practice polygamy.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country. The largest Christian mission group operating in Sindh and Baluchistan engages in Bible translation for the Church of Pakistan (a united church of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans), mostly in tribal areas. An Anglican missionary group fields several missionaries to assist the Church of Pakistan in administrative and educational work. Roman Catholic missionaries, mostly Franciscan, work with the disabled.

Social pressure is such that few persons would admit to being unaffiliated with any religion.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The suspended Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. The suspended Constitution also provides that there will be no taxation for propagation of a religion that is not one's own; no obligation to receive instruction in a religion that is not one's own; and no denial of admission to public schools on the basis of religion. According to the suspended Constitution, the country is an Islamic republic, and Islam is the state religion. Islam also is a core element of the country's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims. Under the suspended Constitution, both the President and the Prime Minister must be Muslims, and all senior officials must swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology." Freedom of speech is provided for; however, this right is subject to "reasonable restrictions" that can be imposed "in the interest of the glory of Islam." Actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophets are not protected.

The suspended Constitution protects religious minorities from being taxed to support the majority religion; no one may be forced to pay taxes for the support of any religion other than his own. For example, Sunni Muslims are subject to the "zakat," a religious tax of 2.5 percent of their income; however, Shi'a Muslims and other religious minorities do not pay the "zakat."

Separate categories exist for different religions in the administration of specific religious sites. Hindus and Sikhs, because of population shifts that occurred between India and Pakistan after partition, come under the auspices of the Evacuee Property Board, which is located in Lahore and is empowered to settle disputes regarding Hindu and Sikh property. However, Hindus and Sikhs may also settle such disputes in civil courts. Christian churches are free to take their disputes over religious property and management to the courts. Some minorities have expressed displeasure over government management of religious property.

In Sindh Muslim mosques and shrines come under the purview of the Auqaf Administration Department, a branch of the provincial government devoted to the upkeep of shrines and mosques, facilities for pilgrims, and the resolution of disputes over possession of a religious site. In both Sindh and Baluchistan, the Government has provided funds for the upkeep and repair of the Hindu Gurumander temple in Karachi, and funded the repair of Hindu temples damaged by Muslim rioters protesting the destruction of the Babri mosque by Hindu mobs in Ayodhya, India in 1992.

Permission to buy land comes from one municipal bureaucracy, and permission to build a house of worship from another. For all religious groups, the process appears to be subject to bureaucratic delays and requests for bribes.

Several Muslim religious holidays are considered national holidays, including Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Azha, Muharram (Shi'a), and the Prophet Mohammed's Birthday. Most businesses also have limited hours during the month of Ramazan.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policies do not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority faiths. For example, all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation, are subject to certain provisions of Shari'a. In the Malakand division and the Kohistan district of the NWFP, ordinances require that "all cases, suits, inquiries, matters, and proceedings in the courts shall be decided in accordance with Shari'a." These ordinances define Shari'a as the injunctions found in both the Koran and the Sunna (tradition) of the Prophet Mohammed. Islamic law judges, with the assistance of the Ulema (Islamic scholars), under the general supervision of the Peshawar High Court, try all court cases in the Malakand Division and the Kohistan District. Elsewhere in the country, partial provisions of Shari'a apply.

The blasphemy laws refer to Sections 295, 296, 297, and 298 of the Penal Code and address offenses relating to religion. Section 295(a), a colonial-era provision, originally stipulated a maximum 2-year sentence for insulting the religion of any class of citizens. In 1991 this sentence was increased to 10 years. In 1982 Section 295(b) was added, which stipulated a sentence of life imprisonment for "whoever willfully defiles, damages, or desecrates a copy of the holy Koran." In 1986 during the martial law period, another amendment, Section 295(c), established the death penalty or life imprisonment for directly or indirectly defiling "the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed." In 1991 a court ruled invalid the option of life imprisonment for this offense. Section 296 outlaws voluntary disturbances of religious assemblies and Section 297 outlaws trespassing on burial grounds. Section 298(a), another colonial-era provision, forbids the use of derogatory remarks about holy per-

sonages. Personal rivals and the authorities have used these blasphemy laws, especially Section 295(c), to threaten, punish, or intimidate Ahmadis, Christians, and even orthodox Muslims. No person has been executed by the State under any of these provisions; however, some persons have been sentenced to death, and religious extremists have killed persons accused under the provisions. The blasphemy laws also have been used to “settle scores” unrelated to religious activity, such as intrafamily or property disputes.

Due to increasing local and international pressure to repeal or modify the blasphemy laws, General Musharraf announced a proposal in April 2000 to modify the administration of the laws so that complainants would have to register new blasphemy cases with the local deputy commissioners instead of with police officials. The goal of the proposed change was to reduce the number of persons who are accused wrongly under the laws; however, many religious minority representatives stated that this suggested administrative change would have done little to protect members of their communities from being charged under the blasphemy laws. Other observers believed that the changes could have led to a reduction in the overall number of cases filed under the blasphemy laws. Religious and sectarian groups mounted large-scale protests against the proposed change and some religious leaders stated that if the laws were changed, even just procedurally, persons would be justified in killing blasphemers themselves. In May 2000, in response to increasing pressure and threats, Musharraf abandoned his proposed reforms to the blasphemy laws. In July 2000, the Government incorporated the Islamic provisions of the suspended Constitution into the Provisional Constitutional Order, including the clause declaring Ahmadis to be non-Muslims.

When blasphemy and other religious cases are brought to court, extremists often pack the courtroom and make public threats about the consequences of an acquittal. As a result, low level judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid a confrontation with, or violence from extremists, often continue trials indefinitely. As a result, those accused of blasphemy often face lengthy time in jail and are burdened with further legal costs and repeated court appearances.

The Government does not restrict religious publishing per se; however, the Government restricts the right to freedom of speech with regard to religion. Speaking in opposition to Islam and publishing an attack on Islam or its Prophets are prohibited. The Penal Code mandates the death sentence for anyone defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammed, life imprisonment for desecrating the Koran, and up to 10 years' imprisonment for insulting another's religious beliefs with intent to outrage religious feelings. Although prosecutions for publishing appear to be few, the threat of the blasphemy law is ever present.

Ahmadis charge that they suffer from restrictions on their press. Christian scriptures and books are available in Karachi and in traveling bookmobiles. However, in recent years, the owner of a Christian bookshop in Karachi has reported frequent questioning by local Muslim religious leaders and occasional questioning by the police. Such questioning may lead to self-censorship among Christians. Hindu and Parsi scriptures are freely available. Foreign books and magazines may be imported freely, but are subject to censorship for objectionable religious content.

The Government does not ban formally the public practice of the Ahmadi religion, but the practice of the Ahmadi faith is restricted severely by law. A 1974 constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis to be a non-Muslim minority because, according to the Government, they do not accept Mohammed as the last Prophet of Islam. However, Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims and observe Islamic practices. In 1984 the Government added Section 298(c) into the Penal Code, prohibiting Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslim or posing as Muslims; from referring to their faith as Islam; from preaching or propagating their faith; from inviting others to accept the Ahmadi faith; and from insulting the religious feelings of Muslims. This section of the Penal Code has caused problems for Ahmadis, particularly the provision that forbids them from “directly or indirectly” posing as Muslims. This vague wording has enabled mainstream Muslim religious leaders to bring charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting form and for naming their children Mohammed. The constitutionality of Section 286(c) was upheld in a split-decision Supreme Court case in 1996. The punishment for violation of this section is imprisonment for up to 3 years and a fine. This provision has been used extensively by the Government and anti-Ahmadi religious groups to target and harass Ahmadis. Ahmadis also are prohibited from holding any conferences or gatherings.

The Government distinguishes between Muslims and non-Muslims with regard to political rights. In national and local elections, Muslims cast their votes for Muslim candidates for a specific geographic locality, while non-Muslims may cast their votes only for at-large non-Muslim candidates. Government officials state that the separate electorates system is a form of affirmative action designed to ensure adequate

minority representation, and that efforts are underway to achieve a consensus among religious minorities on this issue. However, many Christian activists state that the separate electorates are the greatest obstacle to the attainment of Christian religious and civil liberties. Ahmadi leaders encourage Ahmadis not to register as non-Muslims; consequently, most Ahmadis are not represented. Since December 2000, the Government has held a number of local elections around the country. The elections were held on the basis of separate electorates, which entitle non-Muslims to vote only for minority candidates, while Muslims are entitled to vote for Muslim council members in addition to reserved seats for Muslim women and agricultural laborers. Government officials claim that this measure is designed to ensure minority representation. However, opponents of separate electorates, including the majority of religious minority leaders, state that the system partially disenfranchises them. On June 28, 2001, the Supreme Court ruled that non-Muslims may vote for any candidate at the Union Council level for seats reserved for mayor, deputy mayor, laborers, farmers, and women; however, non-Muslims still are barred from voting for Muslim candidates who run for general seats. Three of the five rounds of elections already had occurred prior to this ruling. Few non-Muslims are active in the country's mainstream political parties due to limitations on their ability to run for elective office under the current system. Christian and Hindu leaders conducted a boycott to protest the system of separate electorates during the local elections. In October 2000, a coalition of Christian NGO's sent a petition to General Musharraf requesting a dialog between the Government and minority religious leaders on the controversy; the Government did not acknowledge receipt of this petition.

Religious minorities are afforded fewer legal protections than Muslim citizens. The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdiction, which reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The federal Shari'at court and the Shari'a bench of the Supreme Court serve as appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinances, and judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslims. The federal Shari'at court also may overturn any legislation judged to be inconsistent with the tenets of Islam.

The martial law era Hudood Ordinances criminalize nonmarital rape, extramarital sex, and various gambling, alcohol, and property offenses. The Hudood Ordinances reportedly are based on the Government's interpretation of Islamic principles and are applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some Hudood Ordinance cases are subject to Hadd, or Koranic, punishment; others are subject to Tazir, or secular punishment. Although both types of cases are tried in ordinary criminal courts, special rules of evidence apply in Hadd cases, which discriminate against non-Muslims. For example, a non-Muslim may testify only if the victim also is non-Muslim. Likewise, the testimony of women, Muslim or non-Muslim, is not admissible in cases involving Hadd punishments. Therefore, if a Muslim man rapes a Muslim woman in the presence of women or non-Muslim men, he cannot be convicted under the Hudood Ordinances.

For both Muslims and non-Muslims, all consensual extramarital sexual relations are considered a violation of the Hudood Ordinances; if a woman cannot prove the absence of consent in a rape case, there is a risk that she may be charged with a violation of the Hudood Ordinances for fornication or adultery. The maximum punishment for this offense is public flogging or stoning; however, there are no recorded instances of either type of punishment since the 1980's. According to a police official, in a majority of rape cases, the victims are pressured to drop rape charges because of the threat of Hudood adultery charges being brought against them. A parliamentary commission of inquiry for women has criticized the Hudood Ordinances and recommended their repeal. It also has been charged that the laws on adultery and rape have been subject to widespread misuse, and that 95 percent of the women accused of adultery are found innocent in the court of first instance or on appeal. This commission found that the main victims of the Hudood Ordinances are poor women who are unable to defend themselves against slanderous charges. According to the commission, the laws also have been used by husbands and other male family members to punish their wives and female family members for reasons that have nothing to do with perceived sexual impropriety. Approximately one-third or more of the women in jails in Lahore, Peshawar, and Mardan in 1998 were awaiting trial for adultery under the Hudood Ordinances. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan stated that this ratio remained unchanged during the period covered by this report. However, no Hadd punishment has been imposed since the Hudood Ordinances went into effect. Human rights monitors and women's groups believe that a narrow interpretation of Shari'a has had a harmful effect on the rights of women and minorities, as it reinforces popular attitudes and perceptions and contributes to an atmosphere in which discriminatory treatment of women and non-Muslims is accepted

more readily. Some Islamic scholars also stated privately that the Hudood Ordinances are a misapplication of Shari'a.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which is entrusted with safeguarding religious freedom, has on its masthead a Koranic verse: "Islam is the only religion acceptable to God." The Ministry claims that it spends 30 percent of its annual budget to assist indigent minorities, to repair minority places of worship, to set up minority-run small development schemes, and to celebrate minority festivals. However, religious minorities question its expenditures, observing that localities and villages housing minority citizens go without basic civic amenities. The Bishops' Conference of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), using official budget figures for expenditures in 1998, calculated that the Government actually spent \$17 (PRs 850) on each Muslim and only \$3.20 (PRs 16) on each religious minority citizen per month.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country, and proselytizing (except by Ahmadis) is allowed as long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge that they are not Muslim. However, all missionaries are required to have specific missionary visas, which have a validity of 2 to 5 years and allow only one entry into the country per year. These visas carry the annotation "missionary." Only "replacement" visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries are available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems are frequent.

Upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian men remain legal; however, upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian women, or of other non-Muslims that were performed under the rites of the previous religion, are considered dissolved.

Members of minority religions volunteer for military service in small numbers and there are no official obstacles to their advancement. However, in practice non-Muslims do not rise above the rank of major general and are not assigned to politically sensitive positions.

The Government designates religion on citizens' passports. In order to obtain a passport, citizens must declare whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim; Muslims also must affirm that they accept the unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed, declare that Ahmadis are non-Muslims, and specifically denounce the founder of the Ahmadi movement.

The suspended Constitution safeguards "educational institutions with respect to religion." For example, no student can be forced to receive religious instruction or to participate in religious worship other than his or her own. It also prohibits the denial of religious instruction for students of any religious community or denomination.

"Islamiyyat" (Islamic studies) is compulsory for all Muslim students in state-run schools. Although students of other faiths legally are not required to study Islam, they are not provided with parallel studies in their own religions. In practice teachers compel many non-Muslim students to complete Islamic studies.

The suspended Constitution specifically prohibits discriminatory admission to any governmental educational institution solely on the basis of religion. Government officials state that the only factors affecting admission to governmental educational institutions are students' grades and home provinces. However, students must declare their religion on their application forms. Muslim students must declare in writing that they believe in the unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed; non-Muslims must have their religion verified by the head of their local religious community. Many Ahmadis and Christians report that they face discrimination in applying to government educational institutions due to their religious affiliation.

The Government nationalized all church schools and colleges in Punjab and Sindh in 1972. The Government of Sindh gradually denationalized church schools (without providing compensation) from 1985 to 1995. The Government of Punjab devised a plan to denationalize schools and return them to their original owners in 1996. In Punjab, several schools belonging to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (PCUSA) were denationalized and returned to the former owners in 1998. However, the notification was withdrawn in 1999. In August 2000, four PCUSA-affiliated schools received notification that they would be denationalized. At the end of the period covered by this report, PCUSA was awaiting official notification that six additional schools are to be denationalized. During the period covered by this report, religion-based political parties in Punjab continued to oppose the denationalization of schools.

The suspended Constitution provides for the "freedom to manage religious institutions." In principle, the Government does not restrict organized religions from establishing places of worship and training members of the clergy. However, in practice, Ahmadis suffer from restrictions on this right. Several Ahmadi mosques reportedly

have been closed; others reportedly have been desecrated. Ahmadis also are prohibited from being buried in Muslim graveyards.

The Government restricts the distribution and display of certain religious images such as the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ.

Links with coreligionists in other countries are maintained relatively easily. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan report no difficulties. Ismailis are in regular contact with their headquarters, and their officials, including Prince Karim Aga Khan, visit the country regularly. Under reciprocal visa arrangements, Indian Hindu and Sikh leaders and groups travel regularly to country. However, the Government prohibits Ahmadis from participating in the Hajj (the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia) and Bahai's from traveling to their spiritual center in Israel.

Under the Anti-Terrorist Act, any act, including speech, intended to stir up religious hatred, is punishable by up to 7 years of rigorous imprisonment. In the antiterrorist courts, which virtually were shut down by the Supreme Court in 1998, cases were to be decided within 7 working days, and trials in absentia were permitted. Appeals to an appellate court also were required to occur within 7 days, but appellate authority since has been restored to the high courts and the Supreme Court. Under the act, bail is not to be granted if the judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the accused is guilty.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

No estimate of the number of religious detainees exists; however, the Government has arrested and detained numerous Muslims and non-Muslims for their religious beliefs and practices under the blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws. The blasphemy laws were meant to protect both majority and minority faiths from discrimination or abuse; however, in practice these laws frequently are used by rivals and the authorities to threaten, punish, or intimidate religious minorities. Credible sources estimate that several hundred persons have been arrested since the laws were implemented; however, significantly fewer persons have been tried. Most of the several hundred persons arrested since 1989 have been released due to a lack of sufficient evidence. However, many judges reportedly handed down guilty verdicts to protect themselves and their families from retaliation by religious extremists. Many judges also repeatedly postpone action in certain blasphemy cases in response to religious extremists; the result of this practice is that accused blasphemers remain in prison for extended periods of time. According to the NCJP, religious minorities constitute a proportionally greater percentage of the prison population. Government officials state that although religious minorities account for approximately 5 percent of the country's population, 25 percent of the cases filed under the blasphemy laws are aimed at religious minorities.

Prison conditions, except for the "class A" facilities provided to wealthy and politically high profile prisoners, are extremely poor and constitute a threat to the life and health of prisoners. According to the NCJP and the Center for Legal Aid, Assistance, and Settlement (CLAAS), non-Muslim prisoners do not enjoy the same facilities as Muslim inmates.

According to Ahmadi sources, 166 Ahmadis were charged formally in criminal cases on a "religious basis" (including blasphemy) in 2000, compared to 80 cases in 1999. On September 6, 1999, police officials arrested Ahmadi practitioner Dr. Abdul Ghani for preaching; he was denied bail by the antiterrorist court. In November 2000, the court found him not guilty and ordered his release from prison. On December 1, 2000, Ahmadi practitioner Khaled Ahmed Shams was released; Shams was arrested in 1994 for allegedly preaching in violation of Section 298(c). On August 19, 2000, three Ahmadis were charged with blasphemy for allegedly posing as Muslims and preaching the Ahmadi faith. One of the men, Ghaffar Ahmad, was arrested and remains in prison. The other two, Ilyas Ahmad and Manzur Ahmad, avoided arrest by arranging for bail. On August 25, 2000, a blasphemy case was filed against Manzur Qadir Khan, Dr. Khalid Mahmood, Mohammad Hayat, and Mohammad Idrees of Sargodha district for allegedly preaching the Ahmadi faith to a neighbor, Mohammad Suleiman; Suleiman provided a signed statement denying that the accused ever proselytized him. Khan and Idrees were arrested and held in Sargodha jail; however they were released after several weeks. On October 13, 2000, a blasphemy case was registered against Nasir Ahmad, an Ahmadi, for allegedly defiling a copy of the Koran. According to Ahmadi sources, Ahmad had engaged in an argument with a Sunni Muslim. When the Sunni struck Ahmad with a brick, Ahmad knocked him to the ground along with the copy of the Koran that was in his pocket. Ahmad remained in custody and his trial had not been concluded at the end of the period covered by this report. On April 29, 2001, four Ahmadis, including Abdul Majeed, president of the local Ahmadi community, were charged with blas-

phemy for constructing minarets and the Mihrab of an Ahmadiyya mosque. Three Ahmadis were convicted of blasphemy in December 1997; they were found guilty and were sentenced to life imprisonment and \$1,250 (PRs 50,000) fines. Lawyers for the men appealed the decision to the Lahore high court, which ruled that the defendants were guilty of blasphemy. However, the court ruled that the men should be released as they had already served a sufficient amount of time in prison.

According to Ahmadi sources, on July 30, 1999, a subdivisional magistrate ordered an Ahmadi mosque sealed in Naseerabad, Sindh; it remained sealed at the end of the period covered by this report. In December 1999, several hundred persons looted and burned property in Haveli Lakha, Okara district, Punjab, which belonged to Mohammad Nawaz, a local Ahmadi leader accused of planning to build an Ahmadi house of worship. A neighbor reportedly incited the incident by accusing Nawaz of building the house of worship after the two were involved in a property dispute. Nawaz, a doctor, reportedly intended to build a free clinic next to his home. The mob looted and burned Nawaz's home. According to Ahmadi sources, police personnel arrived at the scene, but did nothing to stop the crowd. As of the end of the period covered by this report, neither the neighbor nor anyone in the crowd had been arrested or questioned in connection with the incident, and police had not taken steps to find or return any of Nawaz's property. However, Nawaz and his two sons were arrested and charged with blasphemy. Several days later, they were released on bail; however, the blasphemy case against them was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Three other Ahmadis in Haveli Lakha also were charged with blasphemy in connection with the incident despite being out of town at the time.

Christian minorities also are frequent targets of the blasphemy laws. On January 11, 2001, seven Christian evangelists and their pastor were arrested for distributing religious literature and showing a film entitled "Who Is Jesus?" in a largely Christian neighborhood in Jacobabad. On April 1, 2001, police registered a blasphemy case against Pervez Masih, a Christian who runs a private school in Sialkot district, Punjab. According to CLAAS, the Sunni Muslim owner of another private school charged Masih with blasphemy because he was jealous of Masih's success in attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim students. Masih remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report.

In May 2001, the Federal Interior Ministry reportedly directed the Punjab provincial authorities to investigate allegations that CLAAS had received funding from foreign governments to propagate false information about the country's blasphemy laws.

In May 2000, a lower court in Sialkot district, Punjab, sentenced two Christian brothers to 35 years' imprisonment each and fined both of them \$1,500 (PRs 75,000). The brothers were convicted of desecrating the Koran and blaspheming against the Prophet Mohammed. Lawyers for the brothers filed an appeal in the Lahore high court; there were no developments in the case during the period covered by this report and the appeal remained pending. On May 2, 2000, Augustine Ashiq Masih was charged with blaspheming against the Prophet in Faisalbad; he remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report. Ayub Masih (detained since 1996) was convicted of blasphemy for making favorable comments about Salman Rushdie, the author of the controversial book, "The Satanic Verses," and was sentenced to death in April 1998. Two Christian NGO's reported that Masih was tortured while in police custody. The appeal still was pending before the Lahore high court at the end of the period covered by this report.

On January 25, 2001, the Lahore high court acquitted Hussain and Issac Masih of blasphemy charges that were filed in a 1998; the judge ruled that the prosecution had failed to provide sufficient evidence to convict.

Police also arrest Muslims under the blasphemy laws; government officials maintain that about three-quarters of the total blasphemy cases that have been brought to trial involved Muslims. In September 1998, a Shi'a Muslim, Ghulam Akbar, was convicted of blasphemy in Rahimyar Khan, Punjab, for allegedly making derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammed in 1995. His death sentence constituted the first time that a Muslim had been sentenced to death for a violation of the blasphemy law. The case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. On August 5, 2000, Mohammad Yusuf Ali, an Islamic mystic of the Sufi order, was convicted of defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammed and sentenced to 35 years' imprisonment then death. An appeal remained pending in the Lahore high court at the end of the period covered by this report. In October 2000, a Sunni Muslim, Dr. Younis Shaikh, was charged with blasphemy in Rawalpindi, Punjab for reportedly stating that the Prophet Mohammed's first marriage was not conducted according to Islamic law and custom in front of his students at Capital Homeopathic College in Rawalpindi. A judge denied Shaikh's request for bail, claiming that he would be

at risk of physical harm from vigilantes if released. Shaikh's trial had not concluded by the end of the period covered by this report. On March 12, 2001, Zahur ul Haq, a Sunni Muslim, was convicted of blasphemy for allegedly coining a blasphemous slogan. Some local newspapers described the atmosphere at his trial as hostile.

Government authorities closed down a leading provincial newspaper, the Frontier Post, and placed five of its employees under protective custody in late January 2001, following the publication of a letter to the editor that contained comments that were critical of Islam. Two employees of the Frontier remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report. Government law enforcement officials failed to prevent a mob from setting fire to the Frontier Post printing presses on January 30, 2001. Security officials did not arrest any of the participants in the mob violence.

On June 4, 2001, government authorities in Abbotabad, NWFP, sealed the office and printing press of Mahaasaib, a local daily newspaper, and arrested the resident editor, shift manager, and subeditor. The authorities accused the newspaper of committing blasphemy because it published an article that argued that Islam does not require men to grow beards. The governor of the NWFP reportedly asked the local administration to reverse its decision; however, the local administration denied the request, stating that it did not wish to provoke social unrest. The staff members remained in custody and the office still was closed at the end of the period covered by this report.

There are scattered reports that authorities interrogate persons due to their religious beliefs or practices.

The law regulates arrest and detention procedures; however, the authorities do not always comply with the law, and police arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Violence in Punjab has prompted the Government on several occasions to round up hundreds of members of religious extremist groups and students at religious schools (madrassahs) believed to be terrorist recruiting centers and training grounds. The police also arrest demonstrators, including members of religious minorities. For example, on January 16, 2001, security personnel arrested 16 Muslim, Christian, and Hindu protesters from the All Faiths' Spiritual Movement International during a demonstration protesting the country's blasphemy laws. Several participants in the demonstration threw stones and ignored police orders to disperse peacefully. No formal charges were filed and all of those arrested were released after several days.

Following the killings of four Sunni clerics on January 28, 2001, Sunni Muslim students participated in violent demonstrations and arson attacks in Karachi (see Section III). The Government dispatched police, paramilitary, and military forces to disperse the demonstrations, and several students and police officers were injured. Following a wave of sectarian killings between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims (see Section III), the Government arrested between 150 and 250 alleged Sunni and Shi'a militants in Karachi. Government officials stated that the arrests and a public call for religious leaders to enforce a code of conduct resulted in a reduction of such killings during the traditionally violent period of Muharram.

The Punjab government ordered a crackdown on extremists in early October 1999; as a result several hundred persons were arrested, including the leader of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Maulana Mohammad Azam Tariq, and SSP branch president Maulana Mohammad Ahmad Ludhianvi. Tariq was released after a year of imprisonment; however, he was arrested again in February 2001 and remained in prison at the end of the period covered by this report.

The authorities sometimes prevent leaders of politico-religious parties from traveling to certain areas if they believe that the presence of such leaders would increase sectarian tensions or cause public violence.

There have been press reports that the authorities are conducting surveillance on the Ahmadis and their institutions.

There have been instances in which police have used excessive force against individuals because of their religious beliefs and practices; however, it sometimes is difficult to determine whether or not religious affiliation is a factor in police brutality. The police also have failed to act against persons who use force against other individuals because of their religious beliefs (see Section II). The Government admits that police brutality against all citizens is a problem. However, both the Christian and Ahmadi communities have documented instances of the use of excessive force by the police and police inaction to prevent violent and often lethal attacks on members of their communities. For example, both the Christian and Ahmadi communities claim that in the past persons have been killed because of their religious beliefs; there were no such allegations during the period covered by this report.

Police torture and other forms of mistreatment of persons in custody are common. However, there were no confirmed reports of torture of prisoners or detainees because of their religious beliefs during the period covered by this report. There were a number of deaths in police custody during the period covered by this report. At

least three of the persons who died in police custody were Christians; however, they were not arrested in connection with their religious beliefs. It remains unclear whether religion was a factor in their deaths.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Religious minorities state that members of their communities, especially minors, sometimes are pressured by private groups and individuals to convert to Islam. For example, on December 2000, 15-year old Nadia Joseph converted to Islam from Christianity and married a Muslim man, Maqsood Ahmed; the girl's father stated that his daughter converted against her will and filed a case against Maqsood under the Hudood Ordinances.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Musharraf Government took several specific steps that slightly improved the situation of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. The Government permitted two members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to interview the Ministers for Minority Affairs, Religious Affairs, Interior, and Law during a December 2000 fact-finding trip. The human rights wing of the Ministry of Law improved its capacity to catalog reports of abuses, including attacks on religious minorities. In April 2001, the Government sponsored a number of seminars in provincial capitals to promote human rights awareness among police officers. The Government also began revising mandatory school curricula to incorporate human rights issues.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Many religious and community leaders, both Muslim and non-Muslim, report that a small minority of extremists account for the vast majority of violent acts against religious minorities. However, discriminatory religious legislation has encouraged an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which has led to acts of violence directed against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and Zikris. Members of religious minorities are subject to violence and harassment, and police at times refuse to prevent such abuses or to charge persons who commit them (see Section II). Wealthy religious minorities and those who belong to religious groups that do not seek converts report fewer instances of discrimination.

Sectarian violence between rival Sunni and Shi'a Muslim groups increased during the first half of 2001. On January 21, 2001, unknown assailants killed Agha Sultani, an Iranian Shi'a teacher. On January 28, 2001, six unidentified assailants killed Sunni Muslim Sheikhul Hhadith Maulana Inayatullah and two other Sunni clerics from a Karachi madrassah while the clerics were in a van. The assailants also killed the son of one of the clerics and the driver of the van. Local commentators believe that the Sipah-e-Mohammad (SSP), a Shi'a Muslim extremist group, was responsible for the killings in response to the death of Agha Sultani. Following these killings, Sunni Muslim students from the Inayatullah's madrassah participated in violent demonstrations and arson attacks in Karachi. The Government dispatched police, paramilitary, and military forces to disperse the demonstrations, and several students and police officers were injured (see Section II).

On February 5, 2001, unknown gunmen killed two members of Tehrik-e-Jafria (TJP), a Shi'a extremist group in Karachi. Police arrested one person in connection with the killing. Another individual confessed that he took part in planning the killings; however, he already had been sentenced to death in an unrelated murder case. Police officials complained that their investigation was hindered by the fact that relatives of the victims refused to permit postmortem examinations on the two men. On February 5, 2001, two gunmen attempted to kill Allah Wasaya, a Sunni cleric who is affiliated with the SSP. Following the attack, police arrested two Shi'a Muslims from the student wing of the TJP; their trial was underway during the period covered by this report.

Between February 18 and February 23, 2001, four Shi'a Muslims were killed in Faisalabad and Punjab province. Police arrested five suspects. Leaders of the TJP publicly accused the SSP of being responsible for the killings.

At least 10 persons were killed during sectarian rioting in Hangu, a small city in the NWFP on March 1, 2001. The SSP arranged prayer gatherings throughout the NWFP for SSP activist Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who was executed on February 28, 2001 for the 1990 killing of the head of the Iranian Cultural Center in Lahore. SSP activists reportedly left one such gathering and proceeded to Hangu's main shopping area where they shot and killed three Shi'a shopkeepers and one Sunni passerby.

Following this incident, armed Sunni and Shi'a groups used mortars, rockets, and other heavy weapons against each other.

On March 4, 2001, four armed men opened fire on a Shi'a mosque and a local grain market of Sheikhpura, killing between 12 (according to local government officials) and 16 (according to a member of a Shi'a political party) persons, including 2 police personnel. The police arrested two suspects, one of whom reportedly is a member of the Sunni extremist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

On March 13, 2001, armed assailants opened fire inside a Sunni mosque in Lahore, killing 12 persons and injuring 11 others. Most commentators believe that the attack was carried out by Shi'a Muslims, either in retaliation for the March 4 Sunni attack on a Shi'a mosque or over a land dispute between local Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Police arrested one Shi'a Muslim in connection with this attack and his case was being reviewed at the end of the period covered by this report.

On May 18, 2001, six men with automatic weapons attacked a vehicle carrying the leader of the Sunni Tehrik party, Saleem Qadri, and seven other Sunnis while they were on their way to Friday prayers in Karachi, killing five and injuring three of the passengers. Local commentators speculated that rival Sunni extremist groups including the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JM) and the SSP might have ordered Qadri's killing. Leaders of the SSP claimed that Shi'a extremists were responsible. According to some observers, the killings could signify the beginning of sectarian conflict between the two major Sunni Muslim sects in the country—the majority Brelvis, to which the Sunni Tehrik belongs, and the smaller but more conservative Deobandis, to which the JM and SSP adhere.

Sectarian violence between members of different religious groups continued to be a serious problem throughout the period covered by this report; Ahmadis, Christians and other religious minorities often were the targets of this violence. On October 11, 2000, a mob led by Muslim clerics attacked the homes of several Hindu families in Baluchistan province after a Hindu woman was accused of destroying a copy of the Koran. The woman, who reportedly is illiterate, wrapped sweets in pages torn from a book that allegedly contained excerpts from the Koran. Police filed charges against several members of the mob; however, they dropped the case after local leaders agreed to pay compensation to the Hindu families. On October 30, 2000, four unidentified assailants attacked with automatic weapons an Ahmadi mosque in Sialkot district, killing five persons and injuring six others. Following the attack, police arrested three of the suspects. According to Ahmadi sources, the suspects were in custody at the end of the period covered by this report; however, no charges had been filed against them. Police also arrested 25 Ahmadis, including 5 who witnessed the killings. On November 10, 2000, a violent crowd ransacked and set fire to an Ahmadi mosque in the Punjab, killing five persons. Prior to the attack, Akhtar Shah, the local mullah reportedly led a mob through the streets shouting anti-Ahmadi slogans. Shah was accused of inciting the riot and was being tried for murder at the end of the period covered by this report. Following the mosque killings, three Sunni Muslim groups filed an application against Ahmadis in Sialkot district for "campaigning" against Muslims. Police arrested 51 Ahmadis, five of whom still were in custody at the end of the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, police made no arrests in connection with past sectarian killings. Numerous such killings remain unresolved. In March 2000, 12 men broke into the Lourdes Convent and attacked Sister Christine, a 78-year old nun; she died in a nearby hospital a few days later. According to the NGO, the Christian Liberation Front (CLF), the perpetrators of the attack were Muslims who previously had accused Sister Christine of proselytizing. Police officials have not arrested anyone in connection with this attack. In May 2000, five masked men stopped a factory bus of female factory employees in Ferozewala and raped six to eight Christian girls who were passengers; the assailants reportedly spared the two Muslim passengers on the bus. Initially, police officials urged the girls to report that they were robbed, not raped; however, when the CLF complained to government officials, the officials immediately registered the cases as rape cases, arrested two suspects, and promised to investigate police behavior. The trial of the suspects was underway at the end of the period covered by this report.

In September 1999, a mob raided a church in Sangla Hill, Punjab, allegedly attacking members of the congregation as they fled the church. In December 1999, a mob vandalized the home of an Ahmadi in Okara district, Punjab, in the presence of some members of the local administration; police officials reportedly charged the Ahmadi and his two sons under the blasphemy laws. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, in January 2000, persons broke into a church in Sialkot and desecrated religious literature. Police have not made any arrests in these cases.

On some university campuses, well-armed groups of students, primarily from radical religious organizations, clash with and intimidate other students, instructors, and administrators over issues such as language, syllabus, examination policies, grades, doctrines, and dress. These groups frequently facilitate cheating on examinations, interfere with the hiring of staff, control who is admitted to the universities, and sometimes also control the funds of the institutions. At Punjab University, a conservative Islamic group attempts to impose its self-defined code of conduct on teachers and students by threatening to foment unrest on campus if its demands are not met. One professor was arrested and charged with blasphemy during the period covered by this report and many others report that they engage in self-censorship in order to avoid antagonizing conservative religious groups.

Ahmadis suffer from societal harassment and discrimination. Even the rumor that someone may be an Ahmadi or have Ahmadi relatives can stifle opportunities for employment or promotion. Most Ahmadis are home-schooled or go to private Ahmadi-run schools. Those Ahmadi students in public schools often are subject to abuse by their non-Ahmadi classmates. The quality of teachers assigned to predominantly Ahmadi schools by the Government reportedly is poor. Christian students reportedly sometimes are forced to eat at separate tables in public schools that are predominately Muslim.

While many Christians belong to the poorest socioeconomic groups, this may be due more to ethnic and social factors than to religion. These factors also may account for a substantial measure of the discrimination that poor Christians face. In Karachi, the majority of Roman Catholics are Goan Christians, or descendants of Eurasian marriages. They often are light-skinned and are relatively well educated and prosperous, in sharp contrast to their coreligionists (mostly members of evangelical denominations), who are often dark-skinned and poorly educated. Many poor Christians remain in the profession of their low caste Hindu ancestors (most of whom were "untouchables"). Their position in society, though somewhat better today than in the past, does not reflect any major progress despite over 100 years of consistent missionary aid and development.

Ismailis report being the object of resentment from Sunni Muslims due to the comparative economic advances they have made. Ismailis have not been harassed by the Government nor have they been targeted by extremist groups; however, they report that they frequently are pressured to adopt certain practices of conservative Muslims or risk being ostracized socially.

Although there are few if any citizens who are Jewish anti-Semitic sentiments appear to be widespread, and anti-Semitic articles in the press are relatively common.

Shikharis generally are ostracized by other Muslims, primarily because of their eating habits.

Some Sunni Muslim groups publish literature calling for violence against Ahmadis and Shi'a Muslims. Some newspapers frequently publish articles that contain derogatory references to religious minorities, especially Ahmadis and Hindus.

Persons who have been accused under the blasphemy laws (see Section II), including those acquitted of the charges against them, often face societal discrimination.

Proselytizing generally is considered socially inappropriate among Muslims; missionaries face some difficulties due to this perception. For example, some Sunni Muslim groups oppose missionary activities and have at times issued verbal threats against missionaries in order to discourage them from working.

While there is no law instituting the death penalty for apostates (those who convert from Islam) as required by the Koran, social pressure against such an action is so powerful that most such conversions reportedly take place in secret. In one high-profile case during the period covered by this report, a movie actress from Karachi converted to Christianity from Islam without penalty. However, according to missionaries, police and other local officials harass villagers and members of the poorer classes who convert. Reprisals and threats of reprisals against suspected converts are common.

Discrimination in employment based on religion is believed to be widespread. Christians in particular have difficulty finding jobs other than those involving menial labor, although Christian activists say that the employment situation has improved somewhat in the private sector in recent years. Christians and Hindus also find themselves disproportionately represented in the country's most oppressed social group, bonded laborers. Illegal bonded labor is widespread. Agriculture, brick-kiln, and domestic workers often are kept virtually as slaves. According to the NCJP, the majority of bonded labor in those sectors is non-Muslim. All are subject to the same conditions, whether they are Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. In 1999 the Government removed colonial-era entries for "sect" from government job application forms to prevent discrimination in hiring. However, the faith of some, particularly of Christians, often can be ascertained from their names.

There are a number of NGO's and civic groups that promote interfaith dialog.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. representatives maintain regular contacts with major Muslim and minority religious groups. Embassy officers also maintain a dialog with government, religious, and minority community representatives to encourage religious freedom and to discuss problems. Embassy officers closely monitor the status of religious freedom and act when appropriate. Embassy officers and the former Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom met with high-level government officials in February 2000 to discuss the blasphemy laws, separate electorates for religious minorities, and the issue of impunity for violent sectarian groups. The Embassy sponsored a series of public speeches by a prominent expert on human rights and Islam during the period covered by this report. On an informal basis, the Embassy has assisted some Christian-affiliated relief organizations in guiding paperwork through government channels. The Embassy also has assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up on specific cases involving religious minorities.

SRI LANKA

The Constitution accords Buddhism the "foremost place," but it is not recognized as the state religion. The Constitution also provides for the right of members of other faiths to practice their religion freely, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Despite generally amicable relations among persons of different faiths, there has been occasional resistance by Buddhists to Christian church activity, and in particular to the activities of evangelical Christian denominations. While the courts generally have upheld the right of evangelical Christian groups to worship and to construct facilities to house their congregations, the State limits the number of foreign religious workers granted temporary residence permits.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 25,322 square miles and a population of approximately 18.5 million. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity all are practiced in the country. Approximately 70 percent of the population are Buddhist, 15 percent are Hindu, 7 percent are Muslim, and 8 percent are Christian. There also are small numbers of Baha'is. Christians tend to be concentrated in the west, with much of the north almost exclusively Hindu. The other parts of the country have a mixture of religions, with Buddhism overwhelmingly present in the south.

Most members of the majority Sinhalese community are Theravada Buddhists. Almost all Muslims are Sunnis, with a small minority of Shi'a, including members of the Borah community. Roman Catholics account for almost 90 percent of the Christians, with Anglicans and other mainstream Protestant churches also present in the cities. The Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Assemblies of God are present as well. Evangelical Christian groups have increased in membership in recent years, although the overall number of members in these groups still is small.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution gives Buddhism a "foremost position," but it also provides for the right of members of other faiths to practice their religions freely, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There is a Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs, which is led by the Prime Minister. Within the Ministry, there is a Department of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs and a Department of Muslim Cultural and Religious Affairs which deal primarily with cultural issues and maintenance of historical sites. The Ministry of Muslim affairs deals with all other issues involving the Muslim community. A Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs monitors government relations with Christian denominations, which have resisted

greater government involvement in their affairs. Instead they are registered individually through acts of Parliament or as corporations under domestic law. Christian denominations must fill out and submit forms in order to be recognized as corporations. This gives them legal standing in Sri Lanka to be treated as corporate entities in their financial and real estate transactions.

Despite the constitutional preference for Buddhism, major religious festivals of all faiths are celebrated as national holidays.

The Government has established councils for interfaith understanding.

There is no tax exemption for religious organizations as such. However, churches and temples are allowed to register as charitable organizations and therefore are entitled to some tax relief.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Foreign clergy may work in the country, but for the last 30 years, the Government has taken steps to limit the number of foreign Christian religious workers given temporary work permits. Permission usually is restricted to denominations that are registered formally with the Government. Most religious workers in the country, including most Christian clergy, are Sri Lankan in origin.

Some evangelical Christians, who constitute less than 1 percent of the population, have expressed concern that their efforts at proselytizing often are met with hostility and harassment by the local Buddhist clergy and others opposed to their work. They sometimes complain that the Government tacitly condones such harassment. However, there is no evidence to support this claim. The Assemblies of God claims that it continues to face opposition at the local level in many areas but states that legal action or the threat of legal action generally has resulted in the Church being allowed to construct facilities for its congregations and conduct worship services.

Religion is a mandatory subject in the school curriculum. Parents and children may choose whether a child studies Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or Christianity. Students of minority religions other than Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity must pursue religious instruction outside of the public school system. There are no separate syllabus provided for smaller religions, such as the Baha'I faith. Religion is taught in schools from an academic point of view.

Issues related to family law, including divorce, child custody, and inheritance are adjudicated by the customary law of each ethnic or religious group. In 1995 the Government raised the minimum age of marriage for women from 12 to 18 years, except in the case of Muslims, who continue to follow their customary religious practices. The application of different legal practices based on membership in a religious or ethnic group may result in discrimination against women.

For the past 18 years the Government (controlled by the Sinhalese, and predominantly Buddhist, majority) has fought the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an insurgent organization fighting for a separate state for the country's Tamil (and predominantly Hindu) minority. Religion does not play a significant role in the conflict, which essentially is rooted in linguistic, ethnic, and political differences. Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians all have been affected by the conflict, which has claimed more than 60,000 lives. The military has issued warnings through public radio before commencing major operations, instructing civilians to congregate at safe zones around churches and temples; however, in the conflict areas in the north, the Government occasionally has been accused of bombing and shelling Hindu temples and Christian churches. In March 1999, government forces recaptured from the LTTE the town of Madhu in the northwestern area of the country, the site of a famous Catholic shrine. Because Madhu was controlled by the LTTE, for several years Catholics from the south had not been able to make the pilgrimage to Madhu. After the town was recaptured by government forces, Catholics were able to resume the pilgrimage. In November 1999 the LTTE recaptured the area where the shrine is located and limited access for a period thereafter. However, during the period covered by this report, the LTTE generally allowed Catholics access to the Shrine.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

The LTTE targeted Buddhist sites, most notably the historic Dalada Maligawa or "Temple of the Tooth," the holiest Buddhist shrine in the country, in the town of Kandy in January 1998. Thirteen worshipers, including several children, were killed by the bombing. The Government still is attempting to locate and arrest the LTTE perpetrators of the attack. As a result, the Government has augmented security at a number of religious sites island-wide, including the Temple of the Tooth. In contrast to previous years, the LTTE did not target Buddhist sites during the period covered by this report; however, the LTTE has not indicated that it will abstain from attacking such targets in the future.

The LTTE has discriminated against Muslims, and in 1990 expelled some 46,000 Muslim inhabitants—virtually the entire Muslim population—from their homes in

areas under LTTE control in the northern part of the island. Most of these persons remain displaced and live in or near welfare centers. Although some Muslims returned to Jaffna in 1997, they did not remain there due to the continuing threat posed by the LTTE. There are credible reports that the LTTE has warned thousands of Muslims displaced from the Mannar area not to return to their homes until the conflict is over. In the past, the LTTE has expropriated Muslim homes, land, and businesses and threatened Muslim families with death if they attempt to return. However, it appears that these attacks by the LTTE are not targeted against persons due to their religious beliefs, but that they are rather a part of an overall strategy to clear the north and east of persons not sympathetic to the cause of an independent Tamil state.

The LTTE has been accused in the past of using church and temple compounds, which civilians are instructed by the Government to congregate in the event of hostilities, as shields for the storage of munitions.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Discrimination based on religious differences is much less common than discrimination based on ethnic group or caste. In general, the members of the various faiths tend to be tolerant of each other's religious beliefs. However, on occasion, evangelical Christians have been harassed by Buddhist monks for their attempts to convert Buddhists to Christianity, and they at times complain that the Government tacitly condones such harassment, although there is no evidence to support this claim (see Section I).

There are reports that members of various religious groups give preference in hiring in the private sector to members of their own group or denomination. This practice likely is linked to the country's ongoing ethnic problems and does not appear to be based principally on religion. There is no indication of preference in employment in the public sector on the basis of religion.

In April 2001, three Sinhalese men attacked a Muslim cashier. The Muslim community in Mawanella protested police inaction during and the day after the attack. In response approximately 2,000 Sinhalese, including Buddhist monks, rioted in the Muslim section of town and confronted the Muslim protesters. Two Muslims were killed, and a number of buildings and vehicles were destroyed. The Muslim community throughout the western portion of the country staged a number of protests claiming the police did nothing to prevent the riot. Some of the protests resulted in direct clashes between the Muslim and Sinhalese communities.

In mid-February 1999, a group of religious leaders from the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities made a visit to the north central part of the country, an LTTE controlled area. The purpose of the visit was to assess the humanitarian situation and to talk with senior LTTE leaders. The group later met with the President, but there were few concrete results. Follow-up meetings with the LTTE were cancelled after government forces captured additional LTTE-held territory that year. Since 1999 independent clergy have maintained intermittent contact with the LTTE. Religious leaders have continued to serve as unofficial envoys between the two warring sides.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Representatives of the Embassy regularly meet with representatives of all of the country's religious groups to review a wide range of human rights, ethnic, and religious freedom issues. The U.S. Ambassador has met with many religious figures, both in Colombo and in his travels around the country. Christian bishops and prominent Buddhist monks, as well as prominent members of the Hindu and Muslim communities, are in regular contact with the Embassy. The Embassy has been supportive of efforts by interfaith religious leaders to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Antigua and Barbuda's two-island nation has a total land area of 170 square miles, 108 on Antigua and 62 on Barbuda. Its population is approximately 66,000. The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Anglican, Methodist, Moravian, and Roman Catholic), but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. The minority religions are Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and Rastafarianism.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular and does not interfere with an individual's right to worship. Most government officials are Christian and Christian Holy Days, such as Good Friday, Whit Monday, and Christmas, are national holidays. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote interfaith understanding.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. Members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them. However, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect discrimination on the basis of religious belief by authorities or simply enforcement of laws against marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practice.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Antigua Christian Council, an interdenominational group, conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, local groups, and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ARGENTINA

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

The Constitution states that the Federal Government “sustains the apostolic Roman Catholic faith” and provides it some privileges not available to other religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, discrimination, including anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim acts, continued to occur.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 1,056,642 square miles, and its population is approximately 36,960,000. The Government has no accurate statistics on the percentage of the population that belongs to the Catholic Church and the other registered churches because the national census does not elicit information on religious affiliation. The Roman Catholic Church claimed 25 million baptized members (approximately 70 percent of the population). Approximately 2.9 million persons, or about 8 percent of the population, are believed to be evangelical Protestants (of whom 70 percent are Pentecostal). There are approximately 180,000 Jews (0.5 percent), 100,000 Apostolic Armenian Orthodox (0.3 percent), and 4,000 Anglicans (0.01 percent) in the country. These statistics were published in the mass-circulation magazine *Gente* in 1999 and are not necessarily authoritative. For example, the number of Muslims was estimated at 800,000 (2 percent of the population), but this figure is disputed by various experts as too high, probably representing all persons of Middle Eastern ethnic origins, many of whom actually do not profess the Muslim faith. One prominent local historian estimated that the actual number of practicing Muslims was closer to 15,000 (0.04 percent). A 1999 Gallup poll estimated that approximately 7 percent of the population (about 258,700 persons) do not profess any religion.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Constitution grants to all residents the right “to profess their faith freely,” and also states that foreigners enjoy all the civil rights of citizens, including the right “to exercise their faith freely.”

The Constitution states that the federal Government “sustains the apostolic Roman Catholic faith,” and the Government provides the Catholic Church with a variety of subsidies. The Secretariat of Worship in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade, and Worship is responsible for conducting the Government’s relations with the Catholic Church, the non-Catholic Christian churches, and other religious organizations in the country.

The Secretariat of Worship maintains a National Registry of approximately 2,800 religious organizations representing approximately 30 religious denominations, including most of the world’s major faiths. Religious organizations that wish to obtain tax-exempt status must register with the Secretariat and must report periodically to the Secretariat to maintain their status. Possession of a place of worship, an organizational charter, and an ordained clergy are among the criteria the Secretariat considers in determining whether to grant or withdraw registration. A new draft law on religion under consideration by Congress would make registration voluntary and would change other elements of the existing law.

The Secretariat of Worship promotes religious pluralism through such activities as conferences at which representatives of the various religious communities meet

to discuss current issues. Leaders of the non-Catholic faiths are invited regularly to attend the Te Deum Mass celebrated in the Metropolitan Cathedral on important national holidays. The Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) are holidays. After some confusion as to whether employees had to be paid their normal salary when they were not working on these religious days, the national Congress passed a law in 2000 requiring that such employees must be paid. The legislature also decided that the same rules should apply to Muslims on their religious holidays. The Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations (DAIA), the leading organization representing the Jewish community, is seeking to have Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur declared as national holidays on which most schools and public offices would be closed.

Registered religious organizations may bring foreign missionaries into the country by applying to the Secretariat of Worship, which in turn notifies the immigration authorities so that the appropriate immigration documents may be issued. There have been no reports of any groups being denied visas for their foreign missionaries.

Public education is secular, but students may request instruction in the faith of their choice, to be carried out in the school itself or at a religious institution, as circumstances warrant. Many churches and synagogues operate private schools, including seminaries and universities.

In January 2000, President De la Rúa committed the Government to implementing a Holocaust Education Project to be carried out under the auspices of the International Holocaust Education Task Force. In late 2000, a senior diplomat was appointed as the country's representative to the Task Force. Representatives have attended meetings of the Task Force as official observers, although the Government has applied to the president of the Task Force for consideration for full membership. The president of the Task Force has not indicated when the country could be integrated as a full member. The Government also began a number of projects including a Holocaust memorial in front of the Congressional building in Buenos Aires and donated a building for a Museum of the Holocaust. On April 19, 2001, in commemoration of the National Day of Tolerance, the Task Force organized a forum on the Holocaust and issues of cultural diversity in the National High School of Buenos Aires. The Ministry of Education is working to include Holocaust education in primary and secondary schools, and has provided training for provincial teachers on Holocaust issues.

The federal government sponsored a number of religious conferences and task forces in cooperation with local nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). In April 2001, the "Holocaust: Memory and Education Forum" was held in Buenos Aires. In May 2001, a conference on the role of religious organizations of social action in conjunction with social programs of the state was held in Buenos Aires.

In May 2000, the Secretariat of Worship created a formal advisors group. The 12 advisors are all laypersons representing different religions. They report directly to the Minister of Worship and advise the Secretariat on issues of common concern, including the new draft law on religion.

The Government, under the lead of the Secretariat of Worship, is in the process of drafting a new Law on Religion, in conjunction with various representatives of religious groups. Draft provisions of the law would define the term "religious liberty," make registration of religious groups at the Secretariat of Worship voluntary, make religious groups other than the Roman Catholic Church eligible to receive funds from the federal government, and create an Advisory Council on Religious Freedom composed of representatives from a variety of religions, as well as theology experts.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, the Government provides the Catholic Church with some subsidies not available to other religions, and some other religious groups have made allegations of religious discrimination in the military and some federal ministries. The Government provides the Catholic Church with a variety of subsidies totaling approximately US \$8 million per annum (8 million pesos) administered through the Secretariat of Worship.

In April 2001, the Jewish community organization DAIA criticized the provincial government of Catamarca over the issue of teaching religion in public schools. Article 270 of the provincial Constitution, in place since 1988, made the teaching of religion in public schools to minors obligatory as long as the parents agreed on the creed being taught. The Article specified that all students would receive instruction in their parents' faith, thus separating children according to religion in a potentially discriminatory fashion. The Article did not take effect until 1999 and affected the 2000 and 2001 school years. After DAIA's initial statements to the media, the pro-

vincial governor, Oscar Aníbal Castillo, revoked the article by ministerial decree in April 2001. Catholic religious leaders demanded that the Article be reinstated. The provincial government and leaders of various religious groups agreed to negotiate a compromise allowing schools in Catamarca to make religious instruction an optional activity which would be held after school hours; however, by the end of June 2001, the negotiators had not reached a final agreement as to the curriculum and where and when it would be enacted.

Some members of the non-Roman Catholic communities perceive religious discrimination in the military service and in some federal ministries. It is difficult to characterize this discrimination accurately and to measure it. Representatives of the Jewish community claim that there have been few if any Jewish citizens who have chosen to seek employment with the military or selected ministries largely due to a perceived fear of future discrimination in obtaining higher rank and appointments. Despite this assertion, there have been government ministers and other Jewish senior government officials in the current and past administrations.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Fifteen former Buenos Aires provincial police officers were linked to a stolen vehicle ring, which furnished the van used in the 1994 AMIA Jewish Cultural Center bombing. They face various criminal charges (see Section III).

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable; however, religious discrimination, especially anti-Semitism, remains a problem. NGO's actively promote interfaith understanding. Ecumenical attendance is common at important religious events, such as the Jewish community's annual Holocaust commemoration.

In May 2001, the Interfaith Center for Social Responsibility (CIRS), an NGO, was officially inaugurated in a ceremony that took place in the National Congressional Chambers. The board of CIRS is made up of religious leaders from the Jewish, Catholic, Methodist, and Muslim faith communities. The goal of CIRS is to reach, inform, and mobilize persons to take social action, primarily through their religious organizations. The first public campaigns of CIRS addressed increasing organ donation awareness and ending child labor.

Religious discrimination remains a problem. Most published reports of antireligious acts were anti-Semitic in nature, although there are also reports of isolated anti-Muslim and anti-Christian acts. Combating religious discrimination and other forms of intolerance is the stated goal of the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism (INADI), an agency of the Ministry of Interior. The Institute, which includes on its board representatives from the major religious faiths, investigates violations of a 1988 law that prohibits discrimination based on "race, religion, nationality, ideology, political opinion, sex, economic position, social class, or physical characteristics," and carries out educational programs to promote social and cultural pluralism and combat discriminatory attitudes. Despite serious problems due to institutional reorganization in early 2000, the agency has renewed effectiveness, although it still has no legal power.

There were a number of reports of anti-Semitic acts, of anti-Semitic violence, and of threats against Jewish organizations and individuals during the period covered by this report. There was also one report of anti-Christian and one report of anti-Muslim violence.

Representatives of the Jewish community, including researchers at the DAIA Center for Social Studies, claim that the number of anti-Semitic incidents decreased somewhat over the period covered by this report. The most frequent incidents include occurrences of anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi graffiti and posters in cities throughout the country.

In June 2000, religious statues were vandalized at a Catholic church in Buenos Aires. No arrests or leads have been reported.

In July 2000, three female Jewish teachers at a school in Buenos Aires received threatening e-mail containing anti-Semitic language. School officials reacted quickly, and a conference on tolerance was organized within the school.

In September 2000, several tombs were vandalized in a Jewish cemetery in the Chaco Province. The police investigated the case, but have no leads. Investigations continued into vandalism at Jewish cemeteries in Ciudadela (1998), La Tablada,

Buenos Aires province (September 1999), and Liniers, Buenos Aires province (October 1999), but there have been no arrests.

There was no progress in the case of three youths arrested for smashing tombs in a Jewish cemetery in Liniers in January 1998, or in the case of the two former Buenos Aires provincial police officers who were suspected of December 1997 attacks on two Jewish cemeteries.

In January 2001, unidentified persons threw a bomb at the windows of a Shiite Islamic Mosque in Buenos Aires. The blast caused significant damage to the Islamic bookstore located in front of the building and injured a police sergeant guarding the mosque. Following a government official's declaration, the police provided increased security for all religious institutions. No progress has been made in the investigation into this bombing.

Following the January 2001 attack on the mosque, the San Justo Islamic Cultural Center in Buenos Aires reported that they received an anti-Islamic threat.

In April 2001, Alberto Merenson, a retired musician and former director of the Symphonic Orchestra of San Juan Province, received a letter bomb, which injured him and damaged his home. A swastika was found inside the box. There has been no progress in the investigation of this crime.

On May 20, 2001, at least one person shouted anti-Semitic remarks at the Secretary for Security for the Ministry of Interior, Dr. Enrique Mathov, while he attended the funeral of a member of the Federal Police. No charges have been brought in this case, and the accused is not believed to be associated with a larger anti-Semitic organization.

Anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant incidents also have occurred in the past at several soccer matches, particularly at matches where one of the teams had a connection with the country's Jewish community. In early 2001, the Argentine Soccer Association established rules whereby games can be stopped or cancelled when any ethnically discriminatory incidents or taunting occur. Since its implementation, this measure reportedly has been successful in reducing discriminatory acts at soccer matches.

There were some developments involving cases of antireligious discrimination from earlier years. In April 1998, a court convicted three Buenos Aires youths for a 1995 assault on a man whom they believed to be Jewish. The court found that the three youths had acted out of "hatred due to race, religion, or nationality," and that they violated the 1988 anti-discrimination statute. They were sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, the maximum penalty provided by law. In February 1999, an appeals court overturned the conviction and ordered the three retried in another court. In October 1999, the Attorney General recommended to the Supreme Court that the original verdict and sentence be sustained. In March 2001, the Supreme Court upheld the 1999 Appeals Court decision and directed that the three youths be tried again. No date for the new trial has been set.

There have been no further developments in the following anti-Semitic incidents: the August 1999 bomb threat against two Jewish families in Paraná, or the Entre Rios and September 1999 incident in which unknown persons shot at a Jewish school in La Floresta. There were no further developments in the cases of bomb threats made to the new AMIA building in 1999, the theater in Tucuman in 1999, or the Jewish country club in San Miguel in February 2000.

The investigations into the 1992 terrorist bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the 1994 bombing of the Jewish Community Center (AMIA) continued. A December 1999 report by the Supreme Court formally determined that Islamic Jihad was responsible for the embassy bombing, based on claims made by the group following the attack and on similarities with other bombings claimed by the group. In September 1999, the Court issued an international arrest warrant for Islamic Jihad leader Imad Mughniyah. No further developments on the embassy bombing took place during the period covered by this report.

There were several developments in the case of the AMIA bombings. In July 1999, the authorities brought formal charges against all the suspects being held in connection with the attack, including a number of former Buenos Aires provincial police officers. The authorities issued charges against Wilson dos Santos, who reportedly had linked Iranian Nasrim Mokhtari to the bombing, arrested him in Switzerland, and extradited him to Argentina in December 2000. The authorities charged him with giving false testimony in the AMIA case in 1999.

Fifteen former police officers are among the 20 defendants who have been linked to a stolen vehicle ring, which furnished the van used in the bombing, and who face various criminal charges. The provincial police officers and others held in the AMIA case are suspected accessories to the crime and not those who are thought to have planned or executed the actual attack. In late February 2000, the investigating judge formally presented for trial the report on his investigation regarding these

suspected accessories. The defendants who are former police officers face charges of various acts of police corruption related to the stolen vehicle used in the bombing. The trial of some of these policemen is scheduled to begin in September 2001 after delays caused by a judge asking for leave due to an illness and the defendants filing for a delay in the date. Judge Galeano's investigation of the bombing continued.

In April 2000, President de la Rúa created a new task force of four independent prosecutors to investigate certain aspects of the AMIA case. The task force is working in parallel with other investigating authorities. On the sixth anniversary of the AMIA bombing in July 2000, President de la Rúa and much of his Cabinet attended a ceremony commemorating the victims at the now-rebuilt cultural center.

In November 1999, Foreign Minister Guido di Tella issued a report of the Government's Commission of Inquiry into the activities of Nazism in the country (CEANA). The report included a preliminary count of at least 180 "war criminals" from Germany, France, and Croatia, who entered Argentina after World War II, and identified a shipment of stolen gold from Croatia's central bank that was sent to Argentina. The report also addressed the extent of Nazi influence on the country during the 1930's and 1940's. CEANA also has published the results of its research in academic journals and has organized seminars in various universities. In April 2001, President De la Rúa extended CEANA's mandate through September 2001. In June 2000, President de la Rúa, during an official overseas visit, made a formal apology for the country's acceptance of Nazi war criminals as immigrants after World War II.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officers meet periodically with a variety of religious leaders and attend events organized by faith-based and nongovernmental organizations that deal with questions of religious freedom. In April and May 2001, the Embassy co-sponsored with the Simon Wiesenthal Center an exhibit on the Holocaust titled "The Courage to Remember."

In April and May 2001, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, at the request of Judge Galeano, sent a team of specialists to work with the judge and other Argentine government officials involved in the AMIA investigation.

The U.S. Embassy assists on an ongoing basis with the Government's implementation of a Holocaust Education Project carried out under the auspices of the International Holocaust Education Task Force.

BAHAMAS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 13,939 square miles, and its population is approximately 305,000.

There are a wide variety of religious beliefs in the country. Over 90 percent of the population profess a religion, and anecdotal evidence suggests that most of these persons attend services on a regular basis. The country is ethnically diverse, with a Haitian minority of as many as 40,000 persons, and a white/European minority that is nearly as large. The country's religious profile reflects this diversity. Protestant Christian denominations (including Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Evangelicals, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Salvation Army) are in the majority, but there are significant Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox populations. Smaller Jewish, Baha'i, and Muslim communities are also active. A small but stable number of citizens identify themselves as Rastafarians, while some members of the country's small resident Guyanese and Indian populations practice Hinduism and

other South Asian religions. Although many unaffiliated Protestant congregations are almost exclusively black, most mainstream churches are integrated racially.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Although there is often reference to the country's strong Christian heritage in political and public discourse, there is no established or official state religion. Clergy are trained freely in the country and the Constitution specifically forbids infringement of a person's freedom to change religion.

Religion is recognized as an academic subject at government schools and is included in mandatory standardized achievement and certificate tests for all students. The country's Christian heritage has a heavy influence on religion classes in government-supported schools, which focus on the study of Christian philosophy, biblical texts, and to a much lesser extent, comparative and non-Christian religions. The Constitution allows students, or their guardians in the case of minors, to opt out of religious education and observance in schools, and this right—although rarely exercised—is respected in practice. Churches and other religious congregations do not face any special registration requirements, although they must incorporate legally in order to purchase land. There are no legal provisions to encourage or discourage the formation of religious communities, which are required to pay the same tariffs and stamp taxes as other companies once they legally incorporate.

The Government permits foreign clergy and missionaries to enter the country and to practice their religion without restriction.

The Government meets regularly with religious leaders, both publicly and privately, to discuss social, political, and economic issues.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious congregations are generally harmonious. There were no reports of religiously motivated violence or discrimination against members of religious minorities during the period covered by this report.

There are several interdenominational organizations and ecumenical movements. These groups freely express their opinions on social, political, and economic issues.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

BARBADOS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Barbados, the most eastern island in the Caribbean chain, has a total land area of 166 square miles; its population is approximately 265,000. Some 96 percent of the population are of African descent. The majority of worshippers adhere to Anglican belief. The dominant religion present in the country is Christianity, with over 125 different denominations. Significant numbers of worshippers are Catholics, Moravians, Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Baha'is, Muslims, Jews, Rastafarians (Nyabinghi School) or members of other faiths or beliefs, including the Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), which sponsors missionary activity.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any steps to promote interfaith understanding but also does not monitor or discriminate according to religious faith. Christian holy days such as Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas are national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country has a history of being open and tolerant of diverse forms of worship. Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Barbados Christian Council and the Caribbean Conference of Churches conduct activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

Although society is dominated by Christian attitudes, values and mores, individuals respect the rights of religious minorities such as Jews, Baha'is, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and others.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, local groups, and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

BELIZE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 8,867 square miles. Its population of approximately 250,000 persons includes a growing Mestizo population (46.4 percent), a diminishing Creole component (27.7 percent), a stable Mayan element (10 percent),

and a Garifuna component (6.4 percent); the balance of the population (9.5 percent) includes Europeans, East Indians, Chinese, Arabs, and North Americans. Most citizens are Roman Catholic (58 percent). Even when Creoles predominated, Roman Catholicism was the principal faith. At one time, 80 percent of the population was Roman Catholic, which underlies the Church's continuing influence in society.

Despite the long period of British colonial rule, only 7 percent of the population are Anglicans. Another 6 percent are Pentecostals. Other faiths and denominations have fewer than 10,000 members. Among them are Methodists (4.2 percent), Seventh-Day Adventists (4.1 percent), and Mennonites (4 percent). There are approximately 5,000 Hindus and Nazarenes and modest numbers of Baha'is, Baptists, Buddhists, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Muslims, Rastafarians, and Salvation Army members, all of whom are able to proselytize freely. Except for the Mennonites and Pentecostals who mostly live in the rural districts of Cayo and Orange Walk, followers of these minority faiths tend to live in Belize City. Roman Catholics are numerous throughout the country and constitute the majority faith in all but one of the country's six districts. In Belize district, Catholics hold a plurality but Anglicans constitute over 27 percent of the population. Only about 6 percent of citizens identify themselves as nonbelievers or members of no religious congregation. There were no reports of the mistreatment of atheists or agnostics.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion. Nevertheless, the preamble to the Constitution makes a very strong affirmation that "the nation of Belize shall be founded upon principles which acknowledge the supremacy of God."

Under the Constitution, freedom of religion is part of a broader protection—that of freedom of conscience. In addition, the Constitution provides that no one shall be compelled to take an oath that is contrary to a person's religion or belief.

There are no special registration requirements or fees for religious organizations, and legal incorporation for a religion or denomination is a simple matter. Property taxes are not levied against churches and other places of worship. However, property taxes are levied against other church-owned buildings occupied on a regular basis such as the pastor's/priest's residence.

Clergy preach, teach, and train freely.

Under the country's revised Immigration and Nationality Act, foreign religious workers are permitted to enter the country and proselytize; however, they must be registered and purchase a religious worker's permit. The yearly fee is modest. There is a steady stream of religious workers and missionaries from the United States. In addition to preaching, these visitors are involved in building and/or renovating schools and churches, providing free medical and dental care, and distributing donated food, clothing, and home fixtures.

The Constitution stipulates that religious communities may establish "places of education" and states that "no such community shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for persons of that community." Although there is no state religion, separation of church and state is ill-defined in the country's educational system, which maintains by statute a strong religious curriculum. The curriculum ties "spirituality" with social studies courses. It requires in both public and private schools that primary school students, from kindergarten through sixth grade, receive 220 minutes of religious instruction and chapel every week. However, school-exit exams do not have a section on religion. There are efforts underway to lessen the religious component of the school day, but most citizens likely would object to a strictly secular school day. Roman Catholic holy days are routinely school holidays. However, the Constitution prohibits any educational institution from compelling a child to receive religious instruction or attend any religious ceremony or observance without his consent or, if under the age of 18, the consent of the child's parents. This constitutional safeguard is particularly important because most of the country's primary and elementary schools, high schools, and colleges are church-affiliated.

The Constitution also stipulates that no one shall be required to receive religious instruction or attend services without their consent while serving in the armed forces or detained in prison or in any corrective institution.

In order to help maintain religious harmony, the Constitution reserves the right of the Government to intervene in religious matters "for the purpose of protecting

the rights and freedoms of other persons,” including the right to observe and practice any religion “without the unsolicited intervention of members of any other religion.”

Several traditional Christian religious holidays, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Monday, and Christmas Day, are observed as national holidays. These holidays do not negatively impact any religious group.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

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

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the faiths are harmonious. Religious groups occasionally join forces in ecumenical efforts to distribute goods to the needy, clean up neighborhoods, alert the public to the dangers of sexual promiscuity, fight crime, protect children, and carry out similar endeavors.

Extortion attempts have been made against Mennonite communities; however, these incidents do not appear to have been due to the religion of the victims. The motive for targeting Mennonites seems to be monetary because some are very prosperous by the country’s standards.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. In addition, embassy representatives met with Mormon and Mennonite community leaders during the period covered by this report, primarily to discuss the crime situation.

BOLIVIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Roman Catholicism is the official religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 425,000 square miles, and its population is estimated at 8.15 million.

The Government did not ask for religious affiliation in the ongoing census. Roman Catholics constitute the majority (estimated at 80 percent) of the population. Protestant Christian denominations are estimated to account for 12 to 15 percent of the population. In the country’s last census (1992), 3 percent of the population specifically indicated that they had no religious affiliation, with the remainder not specifying or listing religions with statistically small followings. There are 272 registered religious groups, mostly Protestant; another approximately 130 applications are pending.

Anywhere between 50 and 60 percent of the population identifies itself as indigenous, from Aymara (est. 1.5 million), Quechua (2.4 million), Guarani (77,000), Chiquitano (63,000) or 1 of 20 other smaller groups. The percentage of the population identifying themselves as indigenous is higher in rural areas, and the Roman Catholic Church tends to be weaker in these parts of the country due to both a lack of resources and indigenous cultural resistance. For many individuals, identification with Roman Catholicism coexists with an attachment to traditional beliefs and rituals, with a focus on the “Pachamama” or “Mother Earth” figure, as well as on “Akeko,” originally an indigenous god of luck, harvests, and general abundance,

whose festival is celebrated widely on January 24. Some indigenous leaders have sought to discard all forms of Christian religion. In 2000 the Government registered 19 religious groups, including 1 traditional indigenous religious group.

Missionary groups include Mennonites, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and many evangelical groups. Most can be characterized as Christian minority religious groups rather than separate religions.

Many church representatives from other countries play a major role in the country. The Mormons have inaugurated a temple/center in Cochabamba for their activities in western South America. There is also a small Jewish community with a synagogue in La Paz, and a few Muslims and a mosque in the eastern city of Santa Cruz. Korean immigrants have their own church in La Paz. The majority of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants have settled in the city of Santa Cruz where they have established communities. There is a university in the city founded by Korean immigrants, which has evangelical/Presbyterian ties. There are Buddhist and Shinto communities, as well as a considerable Baha'i community spread throughout the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. Roman Catholicism predominates, and the Constitution recognizes it as the official religion. The Roman Catholic Church receives support from the State (about 300 priests receive small stipends from the State) and exercises a limited degree of political influence through the Bolivian Bishops' Conference.

In July 2000, President Hugo Banzer Suarez signed a Supreme Decree (similar to an executive order) governing the relationships between religious organizations and the Government, which then entered into force. The new decree replaced a 1985 decree that had been the subject of criticism by Catholic and non-Catholic churches. The new decree reflects input from the churches and, according to the Government, is designed to increase transparency and dialog in church-state relations. For example, under the 1985 decree, evangelical groups had to receive permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship before conducting public gatherings such as outdoor celebrations; the 2000 decree requires only that groups consult civil authorities to address concerns such as traffic. The 2000 decree also requires that the fundraising reports of religions be certified by a notary public. This new requirement is designed to protect churches against allegations of money laundering or receiving money from drug funds.

Non-Catholic religious organizations, including missionary groups, must register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship and receive authorization ("personeria juridica") for legal religious representation. The Government is not known to seek out or restrict gatherings of nonregistered religious groups; however, registration is essential for tax, customs, and other legal benefits. The Ministry cannot deny any organization based on its articles of faith; however, the procedure typically requires legal assistance and can be time consuming. The process has led to the abandonment of a number of officially pending applications that require further legal revision.

Religious groups receiving funds from abroad may enter into a framework agreement ("convenio marco") with the Government, lasting 3 years, which permits them to enjoy a judicial standing similar to the standing of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) and to have tax-free status. Some 20 religious groups, including the Catholic Church, have this framework agreement with the Government.

Only Catholic religious instruction is provided in public schools. It is described as optional, but it is not evident that steps are taken to destigmatize nonparticipation. Non-Catholic instruction is not yet available in public schools for students of other faiths; an alternate course on "ethics" has not yet been implemented. The Constitution prohibits discrimination in employment based on religion, and it does not appear to be common.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government denied religious registration to Hari Krishna in the 1980's, on the grounds of what the Government describes as nonfaith based activities of the group, and has not acted on a new application by that organization initiated in 2000. The Government considers the previous decision to be valid and in force. How-

ever, Hari Krishna continues to operate with official standing as an educational organization.

In 1996 a local mission, the Ekklesia Church, protested its investigation by the Government; however, the issue appeared to be more one of adhering to administrative and fiscal norms than a true religious matter. Based on government allegations of misuse, some of the Ekklesia mission's customs privileges as a religious organization were suspended; however, the Ekklesia church remains registered legally as a religious organization.

The Government does not take any steps to promote interfaith understanding. If the President goes officially to Mass, it is traditional for his Cabinet to accompany him, even though political leaders may have different religious beliefs.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the country's diverse religious communities are amicable, as ecumenical dialog between them continues. In June 1999, the Catholic Church announced that it would no longer call neo-Pentecostal and evangelical churches "sects," which increasingly has been viewed as a pejorative term, but would call them instead "religious organizations." As a demonstration of improving Catholic-Protestant relations, a nationwide meeting of Catholics and Protestants was held in May 2000. Similar meetings were held at the departmental level in La Paz and Cochabamba in May and June 2000, and future meetings are planned. In addition, the churches are encouraging interfaith dialog at the grass-roots level between their members.

In June 1999, a meeting was held among Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious leaders in order to initiate an interfaith dialog in the country. The Catholics and Methodists of Cochabamba have collaborated on publications and vigils, and following the Vatican's lead, Catholics and Lutherans in Bolivia now recognize each other's rituals of baptism.

There are no serious rivalries between religious groups, although there were reports of some resentment of missionary groups by Roman Catholics.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights and as an independent issue. The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officers meet regularly with religious authorities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, principal religious leaders, and the Papal Nuncio.

BRAZIL

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to the free practice of religion, although a rivalry exists among various religious groups vying for greater numbers of adherents.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has total land area of 3,281,865 square miles, and its population is approximately 172.8 million.

Nearly all major religions and religious organizations are present in the country. The Catholic Church's National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) estimates that roughly 75 percent of the population identify themselves as Roman Catholic, although only a small percentage of that number regularly attend Mass. Roughly 20

percent of the population identify themselves as Protestants, the majority of which are Pentecostal/evangelical. Evangelical churches have grown rapidly and have challenged the religious predominance of the Catholic Church. An estimated 85 percent of the country's Protestants are affiliated with Pentecostal/evangelical minority religious groups. Minor denominations include the Assembly of God and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. Lutherans and Baptists make up the bulk of the remaining Protestants and are centered in the southern part of the country, where the majority of German and northern European immigrants concentrated during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Followers of African and syncretistic religions such as Candomble, Xango, Macumba, and Umbanda constitute roughly 4 percent of the population. Candomble is the predominant traditional African religion practiced among Afro-Brazilians. It centers on the worship of African deities brought to the country as a result of the slave trade. Syncretistic forms of African religions that developed in the country include Xango and Macumba, which to varying degrees combine and identify indigenous animist beliefs and Catholic saints with African deities. The capital of Bahia State, Salvador, where most African slaves arrived in the country, is considered the center of Candomble and other traditional African religions. As a result of internal migration during the 20th century, Afro-Brazilian and syncretistic religions have spread throughout the country. Followers of spiritism, mainly Kardecists—followers of the doctrine transcribed by Frenchman Allan Kardec in the 19th century—constitute roughly 1 percent of the population. Many citizens worship in more than one church or participate in the rituals of more than one religion.

Sunni and Shi'a Islam are practiced predominantly by immigrants from Arab countries who have arrived in the country during the past 25 years. Shintoism is maintained to a limited degree among the Japanese-Brazilian community.

Foreign missionary groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and several evangelical organizations, operate freely throughout the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There are no registration requirements for religions or religious groups. There is no favored or state religion. All faiths are free to establish places of worship, train clergy, and proselytize, although the Government controls entry into Indian lands. There is a general provision for access to religious services and counsel in all civil and military establishments.

The Government restricts the access of missionary groups to indigenous peoples and requires groups to seek permission from the National Indian Foundation to enter official indigenous areas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities in the country, although a natural rivalry exists among various religious groups vying for greater numbers of adherents. The influence of evangelical churches in the country is growing. There is no national ecumenical movement.

In 1999 leaders in the Jewish community expressed concern about the appearance of anti-Semitic propaganda on neo-Nazi Internet sites in Brazil during the previous 3 years, and newspaper reports indicated that Rio de Janeiro prosecutors were beginning an investigation into anti-Semitic Internet sites in May 2001. Jewish community activists report that although neo-Nazi groups have issued threats against at least one prominent leader, there have been no reports of any violent incidents directed at Jews.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

CANADA

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 3,850,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 30.7 million.

There is no state or dominant religion; however, an estimated 82.1 percent of the population belong to Christian denominations, with Roman Catholics (45.2 percent) forming the largest single group. Other Catholic groups include Eastern Orthodox (1.4 percent) and Ukrainian Catholics (0.5 percent). Protestants constitute an estimated 36.4 percent of the population, consisting of the United Church (11.5 percent), Anglicans (8.1 percent), Presbyterians (2.4 percent), Lutherans (2.4 percent), Baptists (2.5 percent), Pentecostals (1.6 percent), and other Protestant denominations (7.9 percent). Members of other religions include Jews (1.2 percent), Muslims (0.9 percent), Buddhists (0.6 percent), Hindus (0.6 percent), Sikhs (0.5 percent), groups such as Scientology, Kabalarianism, and Rastafarianism (0.1 percent), and other religions (0.1 percent). Those professing no religion constitute an estimated 12.5 percent of the population.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Religious groups do not have to register with the Government.

The Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protect the rights or privileges possessed by denominational schools at the time of national union in 1867. In practice this protection has meant that some provinces have funded and continue to fund Catholic school education, and some provinces (such as Quebec) have funded some Protestant education. In March 1999, the government-mandated Proulx task force submitted its report to Quebec's National Assembly. Its 14 recommendations include abolishing Catholic and Protestant status for public schools and creating secular public schools instead, with religions studied from a cultural perspective. School boards are scheduled to respond to the Quebec government by July 1, 2001. In May 2001, the Ontario provincial government announced a new policy providing tax credits for private school tuition, including for all private religious schools. Previously, the province provided tax credits only for private Roman Catholic schools.

In the 2000–2001 academic year, the Saskatoon school board implemented a new policy that replaced its prior policy requiring children to recite (or remain silent during the recital of) the Lord's Prayer. Under the new policy, daily school opening exercises are limited to: instruction on the values education units developed by the Saskatoon Public Schools Division; opportunities for personal reflection through a moment of silence; writing in a personal journal; or sharing a thought for the day; or singing the national anthem.

There is no official government council for interfaith dialog, but the Government provides funding for individual ecumenical projects on a case-by-case basis.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. However, in May 2001 a Muslim chaplain filed suit in federal court against an Ontario provincial judge who had ejected him from the courtroom in 1993 for wearing a Muslim cap. The chaplain's initial complaints filed with the provincial and federal human rights commissions were dismissed because the law provides for immunity from human rights laws for judges.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

The B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights received 280 reports of anti-Semitic incidents in 2000. This represented an increase of 5 percent from the 267 incidents reported in 1999. In February 2001, the Human Rights Tribunal (a government entity) completed hearings on the Zundel case examining whether a specific web site exposed Jews to hatred or contempt on the basis of their race, religion, or ethnic origin. The Tribunal is expected to issue a decision by the fall of 2001.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

CHILE

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in the period covered by this report. In March 2000, the Government promulgated a law designed to bring other religious entities closer to the legal status enjoyed by the Catholic Church; however, the Catholic Church still retains an privileged position. Absent specific regulations to implement the new law in government institutions, non-Catholic ministers reported that local administrators sometimes impeded their efforts to carry out their ministries in hospitals, prisons, and military units.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 292,257 square miles and its total population is estimated at approximately 15 million. According to the 1992 census, (the latest official figures available), of the population over the age 14, approximately 77 percent were identified as Roman Catholic. (The census does not take into account religion for persons under age 14.)

The term Evangelical in Chile is used to refer to all non-Catholic Christian churches with the exception of the Orthodox (Greek, Persian, Serbian, Armenian), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. Approximately 90 percent of Evangelicals are Pentecostal. The 1992 census used the terms "Protestant" and "Evangelical" to inquire as to religion, although the terms are often considered interchangeable. Evangelicals totaled 1,198,385 persons, or 12 percent of the population over the age of 14. Those identifying themselves with the term Protestant accounted for 8,259 persons, less than 1 percent of the population. In the census, atheists and those "indifferent" totaled 562,285, or approximately 6 percent of the population over the age of 14. All other religions totaled 409,910 persons, or slightly over 4 percent.

In 1997 spokespersons for Protestant organizations estimated the number of Evangelicals in the country at between 1.8 and 2 million persons. Other estimates are as high as 3 million persons. The active Jewish population is estimated to be

around 30,000 persons. The number of Protestants and Evangelicals has increased steadily with each census since 1930, when only 1.5 percent of the population claimed to be Protestant. The relative percentage of Catholics declines with decreases in socioeconomic status. A 1991 survey found that 93.4 percent of high-income respondents indicated they were Catholic; the proportions declined to 75.2 percent in the middle-income group, and to 69 percent among those in the lower-income group. The survey found that 22 percent of persons at the lower-income levels were Protestants. A June 1998 national survey conducted by the Center for Public Studies (CEP) suggested that 43 percent of Evangelicals were converts from another religion; 98 percent of Catholics had been born into that religion.

The CEP study also found that 8 out of 10 citizens believe in the existence of God, while 14 percent were doubtful and only 2 percent declared themselves atheists. Approximately 72 percent of those surveyed identified themselves as Catholics, 16 percent identified themselves as Evangelicals, 7 percent stated that they had no religion, 4 percent adhered to other religions, and 1 percent did not respond.

The CEP poll also found that 18 percent of respondents claimed to attend a church or temple at least once a week. A 1995 CEP survey placed this figure at 27 percent. In the 1998 survey, 29 percent stated that they never attended religious services. Thirty-two percent stated that they prayed at least once a day and 15 percent stated that they never prayed.

There are a wide variety of active faiths. In addition to the dominant Catholic Church and the Pentecostal Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church, Lutheran Church, Reformed Evangelical Church, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, and the Patriarch of Antioch Orthodox Church are among the Christian denominations present. The Mormons and the Unification Church also are active. Other faiths include Judaism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith. Members of all major faiths are concentrated in the capital, with Catholic, Evangelical, and Pentecostal churches also active in other regions of the country. Jewish communities also are located in Valparaiso, Vina del Mar, Valdivia, Temuco, Concepcion, and Iquique (although there is no synagogue in the Iquique).

Foreign missionaries operate freely, and many priests are of foreign origin.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Church and state are officially separate. However, the Catholic Church continues to enjoy a privileged position among religions and receives preferential treatment. In addition to Christmas, five Roman Catholic holidays are considered national holidays.

Before the March 2000 adoption of the new law on religion ("ley de culto"), religious faiths and related organizations other than the Roman Catholic Church were required to register with the Ministry of Justice as private, nonprofit foundations, corporations, or religiously affiliated clubs to receive tax-exempt status and the right to collect funds. Groups without such juridical status could worship, but did not enjoy the tax-exempt status, fund collection rights, and other benefits that come with legal recognition. Some 800 religious faiths and related organizations are registered under the old system with the Ministry of Justice. Government refusal to register a religious group, or withdrawal of its legal status, was rare, and generally stemmed from misuse of funds by the group or widespread criminal allegations.

Traditionally, the Roman Catholic Church was not governed by the same regulations as other religions; it was not required to register with the Ministry of Justice and enjoyed what amounted to "public right" ("derecho publico") status. Public right status provides that a church cannot lose its juridical standing administratively. Until the new law on religion took effect, the only other church body with this legal status was the Antioch Orthodox Church. Previously, all other religions, and groups affiliated with other religions, only enjoyed "private rights" ("derecho privado"), which allowed for the lifting of status administratively. Approval of the new legislation came only after the law was reworded to make clear that the status historically enjoyed by the Catholic Church would not be affected by the new law.

One of the most important aspects of the new law on religion is that it allows any religion to obtain the legal public right status. Under the new law, the Ministry of Justice may not refuse to accept a registry petition although it can object to the petition within 90 days on the grounds that all legal prerequisites to register have not been satisfied. The petitioner then has 60 days to address objections raised by the Ministry or challenge the Ministry's observations in court. Once a religious entity is registered, the State no longer has the ability to dissolve it by decree. This only may occur through a judicial review initiated by the semiautonomous Council

for the Defense of the State (CDE), which is the official entity charged with defense of the State's legal interests.

In addition, the new law allows churches to adopt a charter and by-laws suited to a religious organization rather than a private corporation. Churches may set up affiliates (schools, clubs, sports organizations) without the need to register them as separate, independent corporations. The law also grants other religions the right to have chaplains in public hospitals, prisons, and military units.

Only about 10 religious faiths and related organizations have changed their legal status with the Ministry of Justice by the end of the period covered by this report; another 90 groups are in the process of doing so. Many churches have delayed registering because of the complexities involved in formulating a new charter and by-laws. Many others have hesitated because of the taxes and fees involved in transferring the property from the old legal entity to the new one. Efforts are underway to have the Government grant a one-time waiver of these taxes and fees for the initial reregistration.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The new religion law grants religions other than the Catholic Church the right to have chaplains in public hospitals, prisons, and military units. However, without specific regulations to implement the new law on religion, non-Catholic ministers continue to report that local administrators present difficulties in granting them access to prisons and public hospitals. Catholic priests usually do not face such difficulties. Although there is a perception that the situation is improving, access remains at the discretion of administrators. Public events are frequently marked by the celebration of a Roman Catholic Mass and, if the event is of a military nature, all members of the participating units are obliged to attend. Religious instruction in public schools is almost exclusively Roman Catholic. The military continues to block efforts by non-Catholic faiths to provide military chaplains. Military recruits, whatever their religion, are required at times to attend Catholic events involving their unit. Membership in the Roman Catholic Church is considered beneficial to one's military career.

Schools are required to offer religious education, on an optional basis, twice a week through middle school. It is mandatory to teach the creed requested by parents, although enforcement is sometimes lax. Local school administrations decide how funds will be spent for religious instruction. The result is that instruction is predominantly in the Roman Catholic faith. According to an unconfirmed press report, the Education and Gospel Task Force in San Pedro de la Paz filed a claim charging that the public school discriminated against Protestant students and families by only hiring Catholic teachers. The group claims that the law allows for parents to request instruction for their students by trained Protestant teachers. The group also maintains that the community is 40 to 50 percent Protestant, and that certified Protestant teachers have applied for jobs, but all have been denied.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the country's religious communities are generally amicable; however, some discrimination and misunderstandings occur. The new law on religion includes a clause that prohibits religious discrimination.

Ecumenical groups exist, although they often are formed on an ad hoc basis depending on the issue involved. All major faiths continued to participate in a human rights "dialog table" led by the Defense Minister, which concluded its activities and submitted a report to the Government on January 6. In addition to Catholic events, government officials attend major Protestant and Jewish religious and other ceremonies.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

U.S. Embassy representatives met with a wide variety of religious leaders, including Santiago's Archbishop and key representatives of Evangelical and Jewish organizations. Informal contact is maintained with representatives and leaders of several other faiths.

As appropriate embassy officials have cooperated on programs such as anti-drug efforts with church-affiliated groups and the B'nai B'rith.

COLOMBIA

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. There is no state religion; however, the Roman Catholic Church retains a de facto privileged status. Paramilitaries sometimes target representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla movements regularly targeted representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons. Guerrillas killed, kidnaped, and extorted money from members of these groups, as well as inhibiting free religious expression.

Relations between various faiths are generally amicable, although some indigenous leaders reportedly were intolerant of nonsyncretistic forms of worship.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 751,680 square miles, and its population is an estimated 39,686,000. Although no official data are available, an April 2001 poll commissioned by El Tiempo newspaper indicated that the country's population is 81 percent Catholic. Of the remaining respondents, 10 percent were non-Catholic Christians, 3.5 percent were evangelical Christians, 1.9 percent professed no religion, 1.4 percent belonged to other religions, 1.3 percent were members of Jehovah's Witnesses, 0.1 percent belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and 0.1 percent were Seventh-Day Adventists. According to the same poll, 60 percent of the respondents said that they do not practice their faith actively. Other religious faiths/movements include Jews, Muslims, animists, and adherents of various syncretistic beliefs. Agnostics and atheists also are present in the country.

Adherents of some religions are concentrated in specific geographic regions. For example, the vast majority of practitioners of a syncretistic religion that blends Roman Catholicism with elements of African animism are Afro-Colombians of Choco department. Jews are concentrated in the major cities, Muslims are concentrated on the Caribbean coast, and adherents of indigenous animistic religions generally are found in remote, rural areas.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The law states that there is no official or state church or religion but adds that the State "is not atheist or agnostic, nor indifferent to Colombians' religious sentiment." Some observers have interpreted this to mean that the State unofficially sanctions a privileged position for the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism was the country's official religion until the adoption of the 1991 Constitution. A Concordat between the Vatican and the Government remains active, although some of the articles have been excluded due to constitutional provisions on freedom of religion. A 1994 Constitutional Court decision declared unconstitutional any official government reference to religious characterizations of the country.

The law on freedom of religion provides a mechanism for religions to obtain the status of recognized legal entities. The Government extends two different kinds of recognition to religions: recognition of the church as a legal entity (*personeria juridica*) and special public recognition. The Ministry of Interior regularly grants the former type of recognition. The only legal requirement is submission of a formal request and basic organizational information. Additionally, any foreign religious faith that wishes to establish a presence in the country must document official recognition by authorities from its home country. The Ministry of Interior may reject any requests that do not comply fully with these established requirements or that violate fundamental constitutional rights.

Accession to the 1997 public law agreement between the State and non-Roman Catholic religious entities is required for any religious group that wishes to minister to its adherents through any public institution, such as public hospitals or prisons, or to perform marriages that are recognized by the State. When considering granting accession to the 1997 agreement, the Government takes into account the number of adherents of the religious group, the degree of popular acceptance the group enjoys within society, and other factors deemed relevant, such as the content of the group's statutes and required behavioral norms. A total of 12 non-Roman Catholic Christian churches have received this special status; however, these churches report that some local authorities have failed to comply with the accord. More than 40 churches have requested accession to a new public law agreement with the Government, which, the churches propose, would have lower standards for recognition than the 1997 agreement. However, no progress was made towards a new agreement during the period covered by this report. No non-Christian religion currently is a signatory to the 1997 public law agreement. Some prominent non-Christian religious groups, such as the Jewish community, have not requested state religious recognition.

Foreign missionaries require a special visa, which is valid for a maximum of 2 years. The Ministry of Foreign Relations may issue visas to foreign missionaries or members of a foreign religion or denomination, provided that the religion or denomination has received special public recognition. Applicants are required to have a certificate issued by the Ministry of Interior confirming that the religious institution is registered with the Ministry, a certificate issued by the religious institution confirming the applicant's membership in that institution and explaining the purpose of the proposed travel, and proof of economic solvency. The Government permits proselytizing among the indigenous population, provided that it is welcome and does not induce members of indigenous communities to adopt changes that endanger their survival on traditional lands.

The Constitution provides parents with the right to choose the type of education their children receive, including religious education. It also states that no one shall be obliged to receive religious education of any type in public schools. The Roman Catholic Church and religious groups that have acceded to the 1997 public law agreement with the State may provide religious instruction in public schools. (No non-Christian religion currently is a signatory to the 1997 public law agreement.) Religions without this special recognition may establish private parochial schools, provided that they comply with Education Ministry requirements. For example, the Jewish community operates its own schools.

The Catholic Church has a unique agreement with the Government to provide schools to rural areas that have no state-run schools. These schools are also tax exempt.

In April 2001, in response to a writ of appeal filed by an evangelical student, the Supreme Council of the Judiciary ruled that the Colombian Institute for Higher Education, which administers the country's college aptitude examinations, is required to provide alternate examination dates for evangelicals whose beliefs preclude taking examinations on Sunday.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although the 1991 Constitution mandated the separation of the Catholic Church from the State, the Church retains a de facto privileged status. According to military regulations, only Roman Catholic priests may serve as chaplains. Participation in the 1997 public law agreement is required for non-Catholic groups in order to minister to soldiers, public hospital patients, and prisoners, and to provide religious instruction in public schools. The State only recognizes marriages celebrated by non-Roman Catholic churches that are signatories to the 1997 public law agreement. A total of 12 non-Roman Catholic Christian churches have received this special status. Some signatories to the public law agreement have complained of discrimination at the local level, such as refusals by municipal authorities to recognize marriages performed by these churches. However, two of these churches now are performing legally recognized marriages, and others expect to be granted recognition when the Ministry of Interior revises its implementing regulations for the public law agreement.

All legally recognized churches, seminaries, monasteries, and convents are exempt from national and local taxes. Local governments also may exempt from taxes religiously affiliated organizations such as schools and libraries. However, in practice, local governments often exempt only organizations that are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. According to the Christian Union Movement (MUC), an association of non-Catholic Christian churches, only 10 municipalities currently exempt non-Catholic churches from taxes.

Faced with threats by paramilitaries or guerrillas, many evangelical preachers were forced to refrain from publicly discussing the country's internal conflict. The Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church also reported that paramilitaries, the ELN, and the FARC sometimes issued death threats against rural priests for speaking out against them.

The FARC has placed religious restrictions on persons within the "despeje," the demilitarized zone established in November 1998 in order to facilitate a Government-FARC dialog leading to formal peace talks. During the period covered by this report, the FARC guerilla movement continued to compel Roman Catholic and evangelical churches to pay "war taxes" levied on many organizations in the despeje and also imposed elsewhere in the country.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Although guerrillas initially were suspected in the April 2000 massacre of 2 evangelical pastors and 12 other persons in Hato Nuevo, Bolivar, a Marine lieutenant and 6 Marine infantrymen are currently under arrest for homicide in this case. According to civilian investigators, the Marines were engaged in combat with the guerrillas and killed the two pastors, whom they had mistaken for guerrillas. They then attempted to hide their error by dressing the two bodies in guerrilla clothing. The other twelve dead are considered guerrilla combat casualties.

In April 1999, the army arrested Colonel Jorge Plazas Acevedo, the chief of intelligence for the army's 13th Brigade, for allegedly heading a gang believed responsible for the kidnaping and killing of several Jewish industrialists, including Benjamin Khoudari, who was killed in October 1998. In July 1999, the army retired Plazas. On April 1, 2000, the Attorney General's office publicly stated that it had found insufficient evidence to bring disciplinary charges against Plazas and asked the Prosecutor General's office to drop its criminal investigation. However, the Prosecutor General's office pursued the case. At the end of the period covered by this report, Colonel Plazas and one civilian paramilitary were on trial in a Bogota court. Two other civilian suspects confessed and are serving sentences. Prosecutors have ordered the capture of several other civilians in the case, who remain at large.

Paramilitaries sometimes target representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla movements regularly target representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Christian churches, generally for political reasons, and killed, kidnaped, and extorted money from members of these churches, as well as inhibiting free religious expression. In August 2000, the human rights unit of the Prosecutor General's Office reported that it had 37 open cases of religiously motivated crimes.

The Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church reported that, from 1987 to 2000, illegal armed groups killed 15 Catholic priests (including 1 bishop) and 5 Protestant pastors. Of these 20 killings, 14 were attributed to the FARC, 4 to the ELN, and 1 to the People's Liberation Army (EPL, a small guerrilla group). According to the MUC, 30 evangelical pastors have been killed in the last 2 years, and more than 50 pastors have been killed in the last 8 years. FARC members were believed responsible for a majority of the killings. The MUC reported an estimated 58 FARC killings of members and pastors between January 1999 and July 2001.

In May 2001, one suspect was charged with the November 1999 killings of Roman Catholic priest Jorge Luis Maza and Spanish aid worker Inigu Egiluz in Choco department. The suspect is expected to stand trial in Quibdo, Choco department. Security forces had arrested nine members of a paramilitary group in connection with the crime.

There was no progress expected in the August 1999 killings of United Pentecostal Church of Colombia preachers Jose Honorio Trivino and Miguel Antonio Ospina.

In May 1999, members of the EPL killed Catholic priest Pedro Leon Camacho in Cachira, Norte de Santander, after he had criticized publicly the guerrilla group's abuses of the civilian population. One suspect in the case was cleared of all charges and released. A second suspect, already under arrest for an unrelated crime, has been charged as an accessory to kidnaping for extortion. However, the authorities have not charged anyone with homicide.

At year's end, the authorities had not yet captured two members of the FARC's 32nd Front—Arley Leal and Milton de Jesus Tonal Redondo ("Joaquin Gomez" or "Usurriaga"), head of the FARC's southern bloc—who were indicted in the 1998 killing of Father Alcides Jimenez in Putumayo. Jimenez was shot 18 times as he gave a sermon in a Catholic church hours after he led a public rally for peace.

On March 11, 2001, unknown persons killed Protestant pastor Onofre Hernandez Benitez as he came out of the Pan-American Church of Arauca. It remains unclear to what extent, if any, the killing was related to religion.

On March 27, 2000, unidentified persons killed Roman Catholic priest Hugo Duque Hernandez at Supia, Caldas department. The case was under investigation at the end of the period covered by this report.

Despite increased pressure by the Government on the FARC to account for three American missionaries from the New Tribes Mission, who were kidnaped by FARC guerrillas in January 1993, their whereabouts and condition remained unknown.

According to the president of the MUC, there was an increase in the number of kidnapings for extortion during the period covered by this report.

In February 2001, evangelical pastor and radio network president Enrique Gomez was kidnaped by unknown persons in Apulo, a small town southwest of Bogota. Gomez reportedly is being held by the FARC for ransom, but his whereabouts and condition were unknown as of June 2001.

A report by the Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church, published in 2000, stated that Roman Catholic churches in Huila, Tolima, Cauca, and Antioquia departments were destroyed through indiscriminate use of force by guerrillas during attacks on towns and police stations.

As of June 2000, the MUC had reported that the FARC had forced the closure of over 300 evangelical churches in Meta, Guajira, Tolima, Vaupes, Guainia, Guaviare, Vichada, Casanare, and Arauca departments. The MUC claims that as of May 2001, 120 more churches had been closed in the southwestern part of the country, and that the FARC in many cases forced the closure of rural evangelical schools. The group also reported that guerrillas continued to attack rural evangelical Christians and their churches in the mistaken belief that the churches were fronts for U.S. Government activities.

In January 2001, representatives of various Christian and evangelical churches reported that the FARC harassed congregation members for refusing to participate in coca cultivation in Meta and Caqueta departments.

Some indigenous groups with distinct animistic or syncretistic religious beliefs are targeted regularly for attack by guerrilla or paramilitary groups. However, these attacks generally are motivated by political differences (whether real or perceived) or by questions of land ownership, rather than by religious differences.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between various faiths are generally amicable. The Roman Catholic Church and some evangelical churches reported that some indigenous leaders were intolerant of nonsyncretistic forms of worship.

Jewish community leaders estimated that as many as one-third of the country's small Jewish community had fled the country at the end of 2000. The principal causes for this emigration included a number of kidnapings, assaults, and murders affecting Jewish business leaders, as well as economic problems resulting from the country's recession.

There was no reported progress in investigation of the April 2000 bombings of three Mormon temples in Cali, in an attack that appeared intended to target U.S. interests rather than the Mormon faith in particular.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, other Christian denominations, and other religions, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

COSTA RICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as

the state religion. However, persons of all denominations freely practice their religion without government interference.

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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country Rica has a total area of 19, 652 square miles, and its population is approximately 3.82 million.

An April 2001 study by the Institute for Population Studies (IDESPO) of Costa Rica's National University reported 70 percent of the population as Catholic with 19 percent claiming membership in other religions and 11 percent claiming no religious affiliation. A 2001 Demoscopia, Inc. poll showed 73 percent of the population as belonging to other Christian, nonCatholic denominations, 4 percent belonging to nonChristian religions and approximately 8 percent as not practicing any religion. The mainstream Protestant denominations—largely Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian—account for slightly less than 1 percent according to the Demoscopia poll. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) claims a membership of less than 1 percent of the population, spread evenly throughout the country. A Mormon temple in San Jose serves as a regional worship center for Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Jehovah's Witnesses have a strong presence on the Caribbean coast and represent less than 1 percent of the population. Seventh-Day Adventists are present and operate a university, attracting students from throughout the Caribbean basin. NonChristian religions including Judaism, Islam, Hare Krishna and the Baha'i Faith claim membership throughout the country with the majority of worshippers residing in the country's Central Valley.

The country's tradition of tolerance and professed pacifism has attracted many religious groups. The Jewish population constitutes less than 1 percent of the country's total; many of its members found refuge before and during the Second World War. The mountain community of Monteverde, a popular tourist destination, was founded during the Korean War by a group of Quakers from the United States, acting on their convictions as conscientious objectors. The country welcomed this community, as well as those of Mennonites, Beechy Amish, and other pacifist religious groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion and requires that the State contribute to its maintenance; however, it also prohibits the State from impeding the free exercise of other religions "that do not impugn universal morality or proper behavior." Members of all denominations freely practice their religion without government interference.

The law grants the Catholic Church tax-free status and allows for the Government to provide land to the Catholic Church. In some cases, the Government retains ownership of the land but grants the Church free use while, in other situations, property simply is donated to the Church. This second method commonly is used to provide land for the construction of local churches. These methods do not meet all needs of the Church, which also buys some land outright. Government-to-Church land transfers are not covered under any blanket legislation. Instead, they are handled by specific legislative action once or twice per year.

The Government does not inhibit the establishment of churches through taxes or special licensing for religious organization. However, churches must incorporate to have legal standing, like any other organization.

Although not mandatory, Catholic religious instruction is permitted in the public schools. Religious education teachers in public schools must be certified by the Roman Catholic Church Conference, which does not certify teachers from other denominations or faiths. This certification is not required of public school educators who teach subjects other than religion. Denominational and nondenominational private schools are free to offer any religious instruction they see fit.

The Government does not restrict the establishment of churches. New churches, primarily evangelical Protestant churches that are located in residential neighborhoods, occasionally have conflicts with local governments due to neighbors' complaints about noise and traffic. In contrast, established Catholic Churches often are built around a municipal square and rarely present such problems.

Despite the official status of the Catholic Church, the Constitution places strict limits on the involvement of any clergy or layman motivated by religion in politics.

Foreign missionaries and clergy of all denominations work and proselytize freely.

Restrictions on Religious Freedoms

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

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist among members of the country's different religions, including religious minorities. The country has a history of tolerance.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

CUBA

The Constitution recognizes the right of citizens to profess and practice any religious belief within the framework of respect for the law; however, in law and in practice, the Government places restrictions on freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In general unregistered religious groups continued to experience varying degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. Some unregistered religious groups were subject to official censure, and also faced pressures from registered religious groups. The Government's policy of permitting apolitical religious activity to take place in government-approved sites remained unchanged; however, citizens worshiping in officially sanctioned churches often were subject to surveillance by state security forces and the Government's efforts to maintain a strong degree of control over religion continued.

The U.S. Government has raised issues of human rights, including religious discrimination and harassment, with government officials; however, the Cuban Government has dismissed these concerns. The U.S. Government continuously urges international pressure on the Government to cease its repressive practices. The U.S. Interests Section in Havana maintains regular contact with various religious leaders.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 68,888 square miles and its population is approximately 11 million. There is no independent authoritative source on the size or composition of religious institutions and their membership. A 1953 survey indicated that 93 percent of the population identified themselves as Roman Catholic. During the period covered by this report, approximately 40 to 45 percent of the population generally are believed to identify themselves, at least nominally, with the Roman Catholic Church, according to information from the U.S.-based Puebla Institute. A significant number of citizens share or have participated in syncretistic Afro-Caribbean beliefs, such as santería. Some sources estimate that as much as 70 percent of the population practice santería or la regla lucumi, which have their roots in West African traditional religion.

The Baptists, represented in four different conventions, are possibly the largest Protestant denomination, followed closely by the Pentecostal churches, in particular the Assemblies of God. Twenty-five denominations recognized by the State, including Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists, are members of the Cuban Coun-

cil of Churches (CCC). Another 24 officially recognized denominations, including Jehovah's Witnesses and the small Jewish community, do not belong to the CCC.

Although much of the population is nominally Roman Catholic, historically it has been a largely secular society without an especially strong religious character. Catholic Church officials usually estimate that approximately 10 percent of baptized Catholics go to Mass regularly. Membership in Protestant churches is estimated at 500,000 persons. No figures on the number of Pentecostals are available, although the Seventh-Day Adventists have stated that their membership numbers are around 30,000 persons. Church attendance has grown in recent years in some denominations, and increased substantially at Catholic Church services following the Pope's visit in January 1998. However, both Catholic and Protestant leaders believe that church attendance peaked during 1999 and early 2000.

There are approximately 320 Catholic priests, 40 deacons, and 650 nuns in the country, less than half the total prior to 1960. Overall numbers of church officials are only slightly higher than before the Papal visit, since most new arrivals replaced retiring priests or those whose time of service in the country had ended.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country through registered churches.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution recognizes the right of citizens to profess and practice any religious belief within the framework of respect for the law; however, in law and in practice, the Government places restrictions on freedom of religion. The Constitution has provided for the separation of church and state since the early 20th century. In 1992 the Constitution was changed and references to scientific materialism or atheism were removed. The Government does not favor any one particular religion or church; however, the Government appears to be most tolerant of some churches that maintain close relations to the State through the CCC.

The Government requires churches and other religious groups to register with the provincial Registry of Associations within the Ministry of the Justice in order to obtain official recognition. Although no new denominations were registered during the period covered by this report, the Government has tolerated some new religions on the island, such as the Baha'i Faith. However, in practice the Government refuses to register most new denominations.

Along with recognized churches, the Roman Catholic humanitarian organization Caritas, the Masons, small human rights groups, and a number of nascent fraternal or professional organizations are the only associations outside the control or influence of the State, the Communist Party, and their mass organizations. The authorities continued to ignore other religious groups' applications for legal recognition, thereby subjecting members of such groups to potential charges of illegal association.

The Government's main interaction with religious denominations is through the Office of Religious Affairs of the Cuban Communist Party. The Ministry of Interior still engages in efforts to control and monitor the country's religious institutions, including surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of religious professionals and laypersons.

The Government has relaxed restrictions on most officially recognized religious denominations. In 1999 the secretary general of the World Council of Churches officially visited the CCC, met with government officials, and presided in a religious ceremony in the First Presbyterian Church in Havana. Jehovah's Witnesses, once considered "active religious enemies of the revolution," are allowed to proselytize quietly door-to-door and generally are not subject to overt government harassment, although there were sporadic reports of harassment by local Communist Party and government officials. In the past, the Government authorized small assemblies of Jehovah's Witnesses, the opening of a central office in Havana, and publication of the group's magazine and other religious tracts.

There is no restriction on the importation of religious literature and symbols, if imported by a registered religious group in accordance with proper importing procedures.

In December 1998, the Government announced in a Politburo declaration that citizens would be allowed to celebrate Christmas as an official holiday; however, a December 1995 decree prohibiting nativity scenes in public buildings except those related to the tourist or foreign commercial sector remained in effect. On Christmas Day 2000, the Government organized and broadcast an ecumenical roundtable discussion on religion, society, and the new millennium.

Since 1992 the Communist Party has admitted as members persons who openly declared their religious faith.

The Government allowed some foreign priests and nuns to enter the country, but applications of 60 priests and 130 nuns remain pending.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Government led to strong confrontations with institutional churches in the early 1960's. During that period, many church leaders and religious professionals left the country, fearing persecution. Over 130 Catholic religious workers, including priests, were expelled, and a few served long prison terms. In 1965 the Government forced many priests, pastors, and others "who made religion a way of life" into forced labor camps called military units to aid production (UMAPS), alongside homosexuals, vagrants, and others considered by the regime to be "social scum." The UMAP system ended in 1967. However, over the following 30 years, the Government and the Communist Party systematically discriminated against and marginalized persons who openly professed their faith by excluding them from certain jobs (e.g., teachers). Although the Government abandoned its official atheism in the early 1990's, most churches had been weakened seriously, and active participation in religious services had fallen drastically.

In early 2001, the Communist Party in Havana prepared a document criticizing inroads into society made by churches, particularly the Catholic Church, and suggested ways in which party officials could supercede the pastoral work of the church. This document stated that churches were asserting themselves into secular society by violating laws and regulations. The church activities criticized by the report included helping the sick and elderly.

The law allows for the construction of new churches, but requires churches to apply for permits to authorize such construction; however, the Government rarely has authorized construction permits, forcing many churches to seek permits to meet in private homes. Most registered churches are granted permission to hold services in private homes. Churches are allowed to reconstruct churches and repair existing churches; however, this also requires a permit. The process of obtaining a permit and purchasing construction materials from government outlets is a lengthy and expensive process.

In March 2001, the Italian news agency ANSA reported that provincial leaders of the Communist Party requested followers to ensure that the charitable work and donations provided by religious groups be limited. The party officials apparently believed that churches, especially the Catholic Church, had gained community support through such activities which threatened the continued rule of the Communist Party. Following the publication of the article, Communist Party leaders in Havana reportedly apologized to the Catholic Church hierarchy.

In April 2000, because of complaints by the Pentecostals regarding unauthorized foreign missionaries (see Section III), the CCC formally requested overseas member church organizations to assist them in controlling foreign missionaries and prohibiting them from establishing unauthorized Pentecostal churches.

Religious officials are allowed to visit prisoners, but prison officials sometimes refuse visits to certain political prisoners. Prison officials took Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet's Bible, later replacing it with another copy. Prison officials also have denied Biscet pastoral visits.

The Government continued to enforce a regulation that prevents any Cuban or joint enterprise (except those with specific authorization) from selling computers, facsimile machines, photocopiers, or other equipment to any church at other than the official—and exorbitant—retail prices.

Some persons claim that the Government discourages members of the armed forces from attending religious services, especially in their uniforms.

Education is secular and no religious educational institutions are allowed. Religious instruction in public schools is not permitted. In the past, students who professed a belief in religion were stigmatized by other students and teachers and were disciplined formally for wearing crucifixes, and for bringing Bibles or other religious materials to school. In some cases in the past, these students were prohibited from attending institutions of higher learning or from studying specific fields; however, recently students who profess a belief in religion commonly attend institutions of higher education.

Churches provide religious education classes to their members. Catholic Church officials report that the number of children attending catechism classes has continued to drop, mostly because of other scheduled activities, usually by local school authorities. There have been no reports of parents being restricted from teaching religion to their children.

Church officials have encountered cases of religious persons experiencing discrimination because of ignorance or personal prejudice by a local official. Religious persons do encounter employment problems in certain professions, such as education.

Religious groups are required to submit a request to the local ruling official of the Communist Party before being allowed to hold processions or events outside of religious buildings.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government monitors all religious groups, including registered and established institutions. The authorities also monitor church-run publications. Government harassment of private houses of worship continued, with evangelical denominations reporting evictions from houses used for those purposes. According to CCC officials, most of the private houses of worship closed were unregistered, making them technically illegal.

There were sporadic reports that local Communist Party and government officials harassed members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

On August 30 2000, the independent press agency Group Decor reported that evangelical pastor Pablo Rodriguez Oropeza and his wife Enma Cabrera Cabrera were evicted from the house where they had lived for 6 years. The press agency did not report the reason for the eviction.

In October 1999, the leader of the United Pentecostal Church, Santos Osmany Dominguez Borjas, was expelled from Havana by security agents and was forced to relocate to Holguin. Osmany returned to Havana a few months later. Members of the United Pentecostal Church of Cuba-Apostolic ("Iglesia Pentecostal Unidad de Cuba-Apostolica") previously had split from the "Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ" because they did not agree with their church's membership in the CCC. Due to this split the group was not registered officially as a religious group.

During 1999 and the first 6 months of 2000, state security officers regularly harassed human rights advocates who sought to attend religious services commemorating special feast days, such as the September 1999 celebration in honor of Our Lady of Charity, or before significant national days. There were some reports that state security officers detained laypersons in order to prevent them from attending Christmas services and processions. Some persons who planned to participate in a religious procession reportedly were going to use the event to protest the continued imprisonment of political activists and other dissidents.

The Ministry of the Interior continued to engage in efforts to control and monitor religious activities, and to use surveillance, infiltration, and harassment against religious groups and religious professionals and lay persons.

In April 2000, a leading editor of one of the Catholic Church's magazines was criticized in a major editorial of the Communist Party's newspaper as a "known counter-revolutionary."

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Most persons largely define themselves as Roman Catholic, although few attend Mass regularly. Catholicism has remained a major cultural reference since colonial times. After 40 years of the current regime, societal attitudes, including those toward religion, are conditioned heavily by the attitude of President Fidel Castro and the ruling regime. The Government's decision to allow, and even provide some support for, the 1998 Papal visit greatly boosted the public perception that espousing religious faith was again acceptable. President Castro further cemented this view, most importantly among Communist Party adherents and government officials, in nationally televised and broadcast speeches in which he claimed that the Cuban Revolution had "never" persecuted religious believers.

There were some tensions among religions, often because some religious groups perceived others to be too close to the Government. Tension within the Pentecostal movement increased due to the establishment of house churches, which some churches believed was fractious, and resulted in Government action against Pentecostal worshippers. In addition, Pentecostal members of the CCC have complained that the preaching activities of unauthorized foreign missionaries has led some of their members of their churches to establish new denominations without obtaining the required permits (see Section II).

The CCC is the only ecumenical body that is recognized by the Government. It comprises many Protestant and Pentecostal denominations and engages in dialog with the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. The Council and the Government generally have a mutually supportive relationship.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Government policy toward Cuba is to promote peaceful, democratic changes and respect for human rights, including religious freedom and the U.S. Government encourages the development of civil society, which includes the strengthening of religious institutions. The U.S. Interests Section in Havana maintains regular contact with the various religious leaders and communities in the country, and supports nongovernmental organization initiatives that aid religious groups. The U.S. Government regularly seeks to facilitate the issuance of licenses for travel by religious persons and for donated goods and materials that in some cases are provided to religious institutions. The U.S. Interests Section has raised issues of human rights, including religious discrimination and harassment, with government officials; however, the Cuban Government has dismissed these concerns. The Interests Section reports on cases of religious discrimination and harassment, and the U.S. Government continuously urges international pressure on the Cuban Government to cease its repressive practices.

DOMINICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Dominica, a mountainous island of 289 square miles, has a population of approximately 72,000. The dominant religion is Christianity, and some 77 percent of the island's residents are Roman Catholic. There are Anglican, Methodist, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Jehovah's Witnesses communities. The minority religions are Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and Rastafarianism.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not restrict an individual's right to worship. The Government does not take any steps to promote interfaith understanding but also does not monitor or discriminate according to religious faith. Christian holy days such as Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas are national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. Members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them. However, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect discrimination on the basis of religious belief by authorities or simply enforcement of laws against marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practice.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Dominica Christian Council and the Dominica Association of Evangelical Churches conduct activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, local groups and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The Dominican Republic, which comprises two-thirds of the island of Hispanola, has a total area of approximately 16,435 square miles, and as of July 2000, the population was 8,442,533.

The major religious denomination is the Roman Catholic Church. Evangelical Christians (especially Assemblies of God, Church of God, Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals), Seventh-Day Adventists, the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses), and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) have a much smaller but generally growing presence. Jehovah's Witnesses have a large country headquarters, school, and assembly hall complex in the national district. In 2000 the Mormons completed the construction of a major temple in Santo Domingo with an associated administrative and educational facility. Many Catholics also practice a combination of Catholicism and Afro-Caribbean beliefs (santeria) or witchcraft (brujeria), but since this practice rarely is admitted openly the number of such adherents is impossible to estimate. Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism are practiced. There are synagogues (but no rabbis at this time) and there is as yet no mosque in the country.

According to Demos 97, a population survey taken in 1997 by the Instituto de Estudios de Poblacion y Desarrollo, the population is 68.1 percent Roman Catholic and 11 percent Protestant Christian, inclusive of evangelicals, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and traditional Protestants. In the same study, 20.1 percent of the sample said that they had no religion. However, evangelical Christians claim 20 to 25 percent of the population, while the Catholic Church claims 87 percent.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

There is no state religion. However, religious groups are required to register with the Government in order to operate legally. Religious groups other than the Catholic Church must request exemptions from customs duties from the Office of the Presidency when importing goods. At times the process of requesting and being granted a tax exemption can be lengthy; some requests have been denied.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Roman Catholic Church, which signed a concordat with the Government in 1954, enjoys special privileges not extended to other religions. These include the use of public funds to underwrite some church expenses, such as rehabilitation of church facilities, and a complete waiver of customs duties when importing goods into the country. The Government generally does not interfere with the practice of religion;

however, attendance at Catholic Mass for members of the National Police is compulsory.

In July 2000, then-President Leonel Fernandez signed a law making Bible reading in public schools obligatory. This new law added Bible reading to the weekly flag raising and singing of the national anthem in public schools. Private schools are not obliged to include Bible reading as part of their weekly activities.

Foreign missionaries are subject to no restrictions other than the same immigration laws that govern other foreign visitors. There have been no reports that the Government has ever used these laws to discriminate against missionaries of any religious affiliation. However, in practice the process of applying for and receiving residency status can be long and costly for denominations that bring in many foreign missionaries, including groups that proselytize heavily such as evangelical Protestant groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The acquisition of a resident status from immigration authorities currently requires an investment of approximately \$35,000 (RD\$ 577,500), which some groups find overly burdensome. So far, the potential negative impact has been avoided only by the liberal use of administrative appeals.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among different religious congregations are harmonious, and society generally is tolerant with respect to religious matters. However, there were occasional reports of religious discrimination on the part of individuals. The evangelical churches proposed a bill requiring Bible reading in public high schools. The Catholic Church opposed the measure, however, negotiations between the two groups on compromise language ended amicably.

An August 1999 report that the directors of Pilar Constanzo Polytechnic School, in Villa Duarte, National District, were discriminating against students and teachers who were not Catholics appears to have been resolved. The public school laid off at least 10 teachers, and there were also complaints that Protestant students were refused admission, despite excellent test scores and grades. Students whose parents are members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, or who adhere to faiths other than Catholicism allegedly were refused entry to the school. Teachers of various denominations work at the school and no similar complaints were lodged against the school during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ECUADOR

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 109,500 square miles, and its population is estimated at 12,920,000. The General Registry of Religious Entities has registered 1,329 different religious groups, churches, societies, Christian fraternities, and foundations.

Together with the military and the Government, the Roman Catholic Church is viewed widely as one of the three pillars of society. Approximately 90 percent of the

population considers itself to be Roman Catholic, although most citizens do not practice the religion, or instead follow a syncretistic version. For example, many sierra Indians follow a brand of Catholicism that combines indigenous beliefs with orthodox Catholic doctrine. Saints often are venerated in ways similar to Indian deities. In 2001 the Catholic Church had 34 bishops and 1,766 priests to minister in 1,200 parishes. At the political level, the Government retains strong ties to the Vatican; the Papal Nuncio is the customary dean of the diplomatic corps.

Some Christian, non-Catholic, multid denominational groups such as the Gospel Missionary Union, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Hoy Cristo Jesus Bendice, have been active in the country for many years. Other active Protestant groups include the Evangelical Group, World Vision, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which operates in remote areas with the eventual objective of translating the Bible into indigenous languages.

The combination of poverty, neglect, and syncretistic practices in urban and rural areas created conditions that were conducive to the spread of Protestant missionary and Pentecostal evangelical activity. Such activity began in the 1960's, but became more pronounced in the 1980's. Southern Baptists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormon Church), Jehovah's Witnesses, and Pentecostals have been successful in finding converts in different parts of the country, particularly among indigenous people in the Sierra provinces of Chimborazo and Pichincha, persons who practice syncretic religions, and groups that are marginalized from society.

The following faiths and denominations also are present in the country, but in relatively small numbers: Anglican, Assembly of God, Baha'i, Buddhist, Episcopalian, Hindu, Jewish, Lutheran, Muslim, Eastern Orthodox, Presbyterian, Rosicrucians, the Unification Church, and the Church of Scientology. Two relatively new groups are the Native American churches of Itzachilatan, whose adherents practice Indian healing rites and nature worship, and the followers of Inti, the traditional Inca sun god. Atheists also exist. The total of these non-Catholic groups represents about 10 percent of the population.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution grants all citizens and foreigners the right to practice the faith of their choice freely, in public or in private; the only limits are "those proscribed by law to protect and respect the diversity, plurality, security, and rights of others."

The Government does not require religious groups to be licensed or registered unless they engage in commercial activity. Requirements for registration are outlined in "The Regulation of Religious Groups" of 2000. These requirements include: non-profit status; information on the nationality and residence of group leaders; and the names used by the group, in order to ensure that names of previously registered groups are not used without their permission. Any religious group wishing to register with the Government must file a petition with the Ministry of Government and provide documentation through a licensed attorney.

The Government permits missionary activity and religious demonstrations by all religions.

The Government does not permit religious instruction in public schools; private schools have complete liberty to provide religious instruction, as do parents in the home. There are no restrictions on publishing religious materials in any language.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to return to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although relations between religious communities generally have been amicable, there have been a few incidents of interreligious or intrareligious tension or violence during periods prior to that covered by this report.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is involved in a 5-year legal dispute with the former owner of some land purchased for a new temple in Guayaquil; however, the case does not appear to be religiously motivated.

In general religious tensions tend to be intrareligious and largely stem from power struggles and personality differences.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

EL SALVADOR

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 Constitution specifically recognizes the Roman Catholic Church and grants it legal status.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land of 8,108 square miles, and its population is over 6 million.

The country is predominantly Roman Catholic. According to a 1995 survey by the Central American University Public Opinion Institute (IUDOP), approximately 56.7 percent of the population were members of the Roman Catholic Church. Additionally, 17.8 percent were members of Protestant churches, 2.3 percent were associated with other churches and religious groups, and 23.2 percent were not affiliated with any church or religion. Outside of the Catholic and Protestant churches, there are small communities representing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventist, Baptist, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, among others. A very small segment of the population practices a native religion. The predominance of the Catholic Church does not impact negatively on the religious freedom of other denominations. Several Protestant missionary groups are active in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Constitution specifically recognizes the Roman Catholic Church, and grants it legal status. In addition, the Constitution provides that other churches may register for such status in accordance with the law. The Civil Code specifies that a church must apply for formal recognition through the General Office of Non-Profit Associations and Foundations (DGFASFL) within the Ministry of Interior. Each church must present a constitution and bylaws that describe, among other things, the type of organization, location of offices, goals and principles, requirements for membership, type and function of ruling bodies, and assessments or dues. The DGFASFL must determine that the constitution and bylaws do not violate the law before it can certify a church. Once certified, the church must publish the DGFASFL approval and its constitution and bylaws in the official government gazette.

In 1997 the Government implemented a 1996 law that charges the Ministry of Interior with registering, regulating, and overseeing the finances of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) and non-Catholic churches in the country. The law

specifically exempts unions, cooperatives, and the Catholic Church. The Ministry of Interior already was responsible for registering non-Catholic churches before passage of the 1996 law. The law and the implementing regulations did not change the existing mechanism for church registration. There have been no allegations that churches encountered problems in obtaining registration.

The regulations implementing the tax law grant recognized churches' tax-exempt status. The regulations also make donations to recognized churches tax-deductible.

Non-Salvadoran nationals seeking to promote actively a church or religion must obtain a special residence visa for religious activities. Visitors to the country are not allowed to proselytize while in the country on a visitor or tourist visa. There were no allegations during the period covered by this report of difficulties in obtaining visas for religious activities.

Public education is secular. Private religious schools operate in the country. All private schools, whether religious or secular, must meet the same standards in order to be approved by the Ministry of Education.

The Constitution requires the President, cabinet ministers and vice ministers, Supreme Court justices, magistrates, the Attorney General, the Public Defender, and other senior government officials to be laypersons. However, there is no such requirement for election to the National Legislative Assembly or municipal government offices.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In December 2000, the Attorney General asked a lower court judge to adjudicate the legality of reopening the case of the 1989 murders of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter. The Attorney General took this action in response to a March 2000 formal request from the rector of the Central American University to prosecute the crime's alleged instigators. The judge ruled that the accused were not covered under the 1993 General Amnesty Law, because they were public officials at the time of the killings. However, she closed the case because the 10-year statute of limitations had expired. In December 2000, both the defense and the prosecution appealed the decision. The defense asked the court to find their clients not guilty rather than apply the statute of limitations. In January 2001, the appeals court upheld the lower court's decision to close the case based on the statute of limitations. It took no position on the amnesty. In an appeal allowed under the law, in February 2001, the prosecution asked the appeals court to reconsider its verdict, which the prosecution alleged was flawed. In March 2001 the appeals court upheld its January ruling.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

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

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to the free practice of religion. Four of the largest Protestant denominations—the Episcopal, Baptist, Lutheran, and Reform churches—are part of the National Conference of Churches (CNI), an interfaith organization created to promote religious tolerance and to coordinate a church-sponsored social program.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government maintains a regular dialog with the principal religious leaders, church officers, church-sponsored universities, and NGO's.

GRENADA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Grenada and 2 smaller islands, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, have a total area of 133 square miles and a population of some 98,000 persons. The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Roman Catholic, Anglican, Seventh-Day Adventist, Presbyterian, Church of God, Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal). The minority religions are Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and Rastafarianism.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular and does not interfere with an individual's right to worship. Most government officials are Christian and Christian holy days, such as Good Friday, Whit Monday, and Christmas, are national holidays. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote interfaith understanding.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. There are no known activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different religions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, local groups, and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

GUATEMALA

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, the Government has not implemented provisions of the Peace Accords regarding the rights of indigenous people that protect the exercise of indigenous religious beliefs and practices.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has land area of 41,699 square miles and the population is slightly over 11 million. While no definitive census data are available, the country's indigenous population is estimated at 55 to 60 percent of the total population.

Historically, the country has been an overwhelmingly Catholic country. However, in recent decades, evangelical Protestant groups have gained a significant number of members. Although there is no accurate census of religious affiliation, some sources estimate that between 50 and 60 percent of the population is Catholic and approximately 40 percent is Protestant, primarily evangelical. Leaders of Maya spiritual organizations maintain that 40 to 50 percent of the population practices some form of indigenous spiritual ritual, but that only about 10 percent do so openly. Other religious groups are represented, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, small communities of Jews, Muslims, and followers of Indian spiritual leader Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Although many persons nominally affiliated with Catholicism or a Protestant denomination do not actively practice their religion, few citizens consider themselves atheists. There are no accurate statistics on church attendance, although various sources report that it is very high in the evangelical community and somewhat lower in the Catholic community.

The largest Protestant denomination is the Assembly of God, followed by the Church of God of the Complete Gospel, and the Prince of Peace Church. There are numerous other Protestant denominations represented, some specific to Central America and others, such as Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians, which are represented worldwide.

Protestant churches historically have been less tolerant of syncretistic practices than the Catholic Church, whose current policy is to accept any pre-Columbian or traditional practices that are not in direct conflict with Catholic dogma. Some observers maintain that a majority of the indigenous members of evangelical churches secretly practice traditional Maya rituals.

Catholic and Protestant churches are distributed throughout the country, and their adherents are distributed among all major ethnic groups and political parties. However, evangelical Protestants appear to be represented in greater proportion in the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), which became the governing party when it won the presidency and a majority in Congress in the winter 1999 elections. The FRG is headed by former de facto President and retired General Efraim Rios Montt, now President of Congress and a long-time elder of the evangelical Protestant Church of the Word.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government has not implemented the 1995 Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which provides for the respect of spiritual rights of indigenous people. The Agreement calls for Congress to pass legislation to amend the Constitution in order to "recognize, respect, and protect the distinct forms of spirituality practiced by the Maya, Garifuna, and Xinka" groups. While the previous Congress passed a law containing 50 proposed constitutional amendments, including this one, the package was defeated in a popular referendum in May 1999, and no further efforts have been made to amend the Constitution. There is no state religion; however, the Constitution recognizes explicitly the separate legal personality of the Catholic Church.

The Government does not establish requirements for the recognition of religions. Members of a religion need not register simply in order to worship together. However, the Government does require religious congregations (as well as other nonreligious associations and nongovernmental organizations) to register as legal entities in order to be able to transact business. Such legal recognition is necessary, among other things, for a congregation to be able to rent or purchase premises, enter into contracts, and enjoy tax-exempt status. The Government does not charge religious groups a registration fee.

The Catholic Church does not have to register as a legal entity. For non-Catholic congregations, the process for establishing a legal personality is relatively straightforward, and the requirements do not vary from one denomination to another. A congregation must file a copy of its bylaws and a list of its initial membership with the Ministry of Government. The congregation must have at least 25 initial members, and the bylaws must reflect that the congregation will pursue religious or spiritual purposes. Applications are rejected only if the organization does not appear to

be devoted to a religious purpose, appears to be in pursuit of illegal activities, or engages in activities that appear likely to threaten the public order. There were no reports that the Government rejected any group's application.

Foreign missionaries are required to obtain a missionary visa, which is issued for a period of up to 1 year and is renewable. Such visas require a sponsor who is able and willing to assume financial responsibility for the missionary while he or she is in the country. With a missionary visa, foreign missionaries may engage in all lawful activities, including proselytizing.

The Government does not subsidize religious groups directly. However, some sources report that the Government occasionally provides financial assistance to private schools established by religious organizations. The Constitution permits religious instruction in public schools, although public schools are not required to provide such instruction. There is no national framework for determining the nature or content of religious instruction in public schools. Accordingly, when provided, such instruction tends to be programmed at the local level.

The Government does not have any organized programs to promote interfaith understanding or dialog. Nonetheless, the Government has sought the support of diverse religious groups for passage of legal statutes on the rights of children and with implementation of health and literacy programs for children. For a number of churches, such public service projects are the only forum for interaction with adherents of other faiths.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

While there is no government policy of discrimination, a lack of resources and political will to enforce existing laws and to implement the Peace Accords limits the free expression of indigenous religious practice. Indigenous leaders note that Maya culture does not receive the official recognition that it is due. The Government has not provided mechanisms for free access to ceremonial sites considered sacred within indigenous culture, nor has the Government provided for the preservation or protection of such ceremonial sites as archaeological preserves. The Government's use of sacred sites as revenue-generating tourist destinations is considered by some indigenous groups to be an affront to their spiritual rights.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On June 8, a court convicted three military officers, former Presidential Military Staff (EMP) specialist Obdulio Villanueva; active-duty EMP Captain Byron Lima Oliva; and Lima Oliva's father, retired Colonel Byron Lima Estrada, of the April 26, 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi, the Coordinator of the Archbishop's Office on Human Rights. The court sentenced them to 30-year, noncommutable sentences. Because the murder occurred just 2 days after Bishop Gerardi delivered the final report of the Office's "Recovery of Historical Memory" project, which detailed many of the human rights abuses committed during the internal conflict and held the military, military commissioners, and civil self-defense patrol forces responsible for more than 90 percent of war-related human rights violations, some observers had suspected a political motive for the crime. There was no evidence that suggests the murder was motivated by the Bishop's religious faith or practice. The court also found the bishop's assistant, Father Mario Orantes, guilty and sentenced him to 20 years' imprisonment.

Prosecutors appear to have dropped the case of Mayan priest Raul Coc Choc who was shot and killed at his home in the department of Chimaltenango. Coc Choc was a leader of the National Association of Mayan Priests; members of the board reported that he had received numerous death threats over the telephone.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees. However, there were credible reports that agents of Military Intelligence continue to monitor the activities of religious leaders well after the end of the armed conflict.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable, if distant. According to members of the Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and Jewish communities, complaints of discrimination on the basis of religion are rare. There were no reports of violence against religious minorities. However, widespread intolerance of the free practice of traditional indigenous religious rituals was reported.

Although indigenous Guatemalans outnumber the westernized “Ladino” community, they historically have been dominated by the Ladinos and generally excluded from the mainstream of social, economic, and political activity. The Ladino community long has regarded indigenous people with disdain. Reports of discrimination against indigenous religious practices must be viewed in the context of this widespread Ladino rejection of indigenous culture.

Within the Jewish community, there were virtually no encounters with anti-Semitism. However, a leader of the Jewish community reported that Jews do not feel that they are seen to be fully Guatemalan by their compatriots of other faiths.

Maya religious leaders note widespread discrimination by evangelical Protestants, and to a lesser extent, by Catholics. For example, despite the large number of indigenous members of evangelical congregations, traditional religious practice often is described as “witchcraft” or “devil worship.” Indigenous evangelicals regularly are threatened with expulsion from the church if they should become involved with traditional religious practices.

There is a split among evangelical Protestant churches between a majority group, which strongly opposes ecumenical engagement with other churches or religious traditions, and a minority group, which actively promotes an ecumenical and multicultural vision. Within the former organization, groups that engage with practitioners of other faiths are asked to renounce their status as evangelical churches within the organization and are given the status of public service agencies instead.

The ecumenical movement is very weak, although there are occasional interfaith meetings.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officials at various levels, including the Ambassador, have met on many occasions with leaders of major religious institutions within the country as well as religious-based nongovernmental organizations. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is working closely with Maya spiritual leaders in conducting community mental health projects linked to the exhumations of mass graves created during the internal conflict, which are only now being unearthed. USAID also supports bilingual education for indigenous children which is based on the Maya worldview, including core spiritual values. The Public Affairs Section of the Embassy has promoted dialog between leaders of Maya and Ladino groups within civil society and within diverse religious communities. The Public Affairs Section also has sponsored ecumenical events focused on the role of religion in the construction of peace.

GUYANA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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.

Despite ethnic tensions, the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 82,980 square miles, and its population is approximately 700,000. The country is very religiously and ethnically diverse. Nearly half of the population traces its ancestry to the Indian subcontinent, and more than one-third of the population is of African descent. These two major ethnicities, along with smaller groups of native South Americans and persons of European and Chinese descent, practice a wide variety of religions.

Approximately 50 percent of the population are either practicing or nominal Christians—of these roughly one-third are Anglicans, one-quarter are Roman Catholics, and one-quarter are Pentecostals and Baptists; there are smaller percentages of Methodists, Presbyterians, Seventh-Day Adventists, Lutherans, and members of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Practicing or nominal Hindus constitute approximately 33 per-

cent of the population, and Muslims (both Sunni and Shia) constitute about 15 percent. There are also a small number of Mormons and Baha'is. Although not included in official figures, substantial numbers of persons practice Rastafarianism and/or a traditional Caribbean religion known locally as "Obeah," either apart from or in conjunction with the practice of other faiths. Members of all ethnic groups are well represented in all religions, with two exceptions: almost all Hindus are Indo-Guyanese, while nearly all Rastafarians are Afro-Guyanese.

There are a wide variety of foreign missionaries in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Members of all faiths are allowed to worship freely. There is no state or otherwise dominant religion, and the Government practices no form of religious favoritism or discrimination.

Until 1979 almost all elementary and high schools in the country were run by church-affiliated organizations. In 1979 the Government effectively banned such schools, took church school property without compensation, declared that all schools would come under government control, and required that all children attend public, nondenominational schools. However, beginning in the late 1980's, these provisions were relaxed. Both public and religiously affiliated schools exist, and parents are free to send their children to the schools of their choice without sanction or restriction. The Government makes no requirements regarding religion for any official or nonofficial purposes.

The Government has promoted cooperation among religious communities as a means of addressing long-standing racial tensions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the country's diverse religious communities are amicable. Although significant problems exist between the country's two main ethnic groups, religious leaders have worked together frequently to attempt to bridge these gaps.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, local groups, and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

HAITI

The Constitution provides for the right to practice all religions and faiths, provided that practice does not disturb law and order, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,714 square miles and shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic. Its estimated population is 7 to 8 million.

While precise statistics are unavailable, about 80 percent of citizens are Roman Catholic. Most of the remainder belong to a variety of Protestant denominations. The largest of these are Baptist (10 percent) and Pentecostal (4 percent). Other significant non-Catholic Christian groups include Methodists, Episcopalians, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Adventists, and Orthodox. There are also many nondenominational Christian congregations. The percentage of Protestants generally is acknowledged to be growing, but reliable statistics are unavailable. Small numbers of non-Christian groups are present, including Jews, Muslims, Rastafarians, and Baha'is. Voodoo, a traditional religion derived in part from West African beliefs, is practiced alongside Christianity by a large segment of the population. While there are associations of voodoo practitioners and priests, there is no organized hierarchy or established voodoo church.

Many foreign missionaries are affiliated with U.S.-based denominations or individual churches. Others are independent, nondenominational Christian groups. Missionary groups operate hospitals, orphanages, schools, and clinics throughout the country. U.S. churches often send teams to Haiti on short-term projects. Some of these projects involve humanitarian or educational work, while others are purely evangelistic in nature.

Some Protestant and Catholic clergy are active in politics. A Protestant pastor leads a political party, MOCHRENA (Christian Movement for a New Haiti). Several Catholic priests are among the leadership of the Fanmi Lavalas party of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, who is himself a former priest. The Conference of Catholic Bishops (CEH) occasionally issues statements on political matters and along with the Protestant Federation, has been an active participant in the search in 2001 for a solution to the political stand off between the President and the opposition. The Director General of the Office of Religious Affairs, a part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cults, is a Roman Catholic priest.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for the right to practice all religions and faiths, provided that practices does not disturb law and order, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The 1987 Constitution grants freedom of religion and directs the establishment of laws to regulate the recognition and operation of religious groups. The Ministry of Religious Affairs administers the relevant laws and is responsible for registering churches, clergy, and missionaries. Recognition by the Ministry affords religious groups standing in legal disputes, protects churches' tax-exempt status, and extends civil recognition to church documents such as marriage and baptismal certificates. Registered religious groups are required to submit an annual report of their activities to the Ministry. Although many nondenominational Christian groups and voodoo practitioners have not sought official recognition, there were no reports of any instance in which this requirement has hampered the operation of a religious group. Goods brought into the country for use by churches and missionaries registered with the Department of Revenue are exempted from customs duties, and registered churches are not taxed. Some church organizations have complained that custom officials sometimes refused to honor a church's tax-exempt status; however, it appeared that these refusals generally were attempts by corrupt officials to extort bribes rather than an attempt to limit religious practices.

For many years, Roman Catholicism was the official religion of the country. While its official status ended with the enactment of the 1987 Constitution, neither the Government nor the Holy See has renounced the 1860 Concordat, which continues to serve as the basis for relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the State and the operation of Catholic religious orders in the country. In many respects, Roman Catholicism retains its traditional primacy among the country's religions. Functions with an official or quasi-official character are held in Catholic churches and cathedrals, and certain Catholic holy days are observed officially as national holidays. However, in recent years, the government has recognized the growing role of Protestant churches by, for example, inviting their clergy when the churches are asked to play an advisory role in politics.

Foreign missionaries operate freely. They enter on regular tourist visas and submit paperwork similar to that submitted by domestic religious groups in order to register with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. While some missionaries were concerned by the slowness of the Government to issue them residence permits, there was no indication that such delay was due to deliberate harassment on the part of the authorities.

The Constitution stipulates that persons cannot be required to join an organization or receive religious instruction contrary to their convictions. This is accepted to mean, among other things, that in parochial schools run by the Catholic Church or one of the Protestant denominations, the school authorities may not permit proselytization on behalf of the church with which the school is affiliated. Parents have been quick to complain and publicize the isolated instances in which this principle has been violated.

Only 15 percent of the country's schools are public. In some of these, Catholic and other clergy play a role in teaching and administration. This is regulated by local authorities on an ad hoc basis. Church-run schools and hospitals are subject to oversight by the Ministries of Education and Health, respectively.

The Government does not interfere with the operation of radio and other media affiliated with religious groups. In addition to the many radio stations operated by religious (mostly Protestant and evangelical) groups, religious programming is a staple of commercial broadcasting.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religion plays a prominent role in society. Many citizens display a keen interest in religious matters, and freely express their personal religious beliefs or affiliation. While society generally is tolerant of the variety of religious practices that flourish in the country, Christian attitudes toward voodoo vary. Many Christians accept voodoo as part of the country's cultural patrimony, but others regard it as incompatible with Christianity, and this has led to isolated instances of conflict in the recent past. Periodic tension between some Protestant and voodoo groups has been managed effectively by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry maintains offices in the central, north, and south areas of the country. Tensions between Protestant and voodoo groups are local in nature and usually involve land disputes and/or conflicts over proselytizing. In some cases, the Ministry sends representatives to assist local authorities in settling such conflicts. Parties to these local conflicts usually accept the Ministry's mediating role.

Ecumenical organizations exist. Interfaith cooperation is perhaps most effective in the National Federation of Private Schools (FONHEP).

Particularly in rural areas, accusations of sorcery have been known to lead to mob violence resulting in deaths. Women generally are targeted in these cases, which usually are precipitated by the death of a child by unknown causes. Given the prevalence of voodoo in rural areas, it appears likely that voodoo practitioners are targeted in some of these cases.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy representatives routinely meet with religious officials and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince maintains contact with many American missionaries and is responsive to their concerns.

HONDURAS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 43,278 square miles, and its total population is slightly more than 6 million. While no definitive census data is available, the country's mestizo (mixed Amerindian and European) population is estimated at 90 percent of the total, with small numbers of Amerindians, descendants of African slaves, and European settlers making up the rest.

There are no reliable government statistics on the distribution of membership in churches. The Catholic Church reports a total membership of just over 80 percent of the population.

In February and March 1999, the Le Vote company conducted personal interviews on religious issues with persons age 18 or older in 1,330 households distributed throughout the country. The company reported that 60.3 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Catholics, 28.7 percent as evangelical Christians, and 6.8 percent as other; 4.2 percent either did not know or provided no answer. The principal faiths include Roman Catholicism, Judaism, the Greek Orthodox rite, the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mennonite Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Union Church, and some 300 evangelical Protestant churches, the most prominent of which include the Abundant Life, Living Love, and Grand Commission churches. The National Association of Evangelical Pastors represents the evangelical leadership.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

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

There is no state religion. However, the armed forces have an official Roman Catholic patron saint. The Government consults with the Roman Catholic Church, and occasionally appoints Catholic leaders to quasi-official commissions, on key issues of mutual concern, such as anticorruption initiatives.

The Constitution grants the President the power to grant "juridical personality" to associations, including churches. This personality is a prerequisite to being accorded certain rights and privileges, such as tax exemption. Associations are required to submit an application describing their internal organization, by laws, and goals to the Ministry of Government and Justice. In the case of evangelical churches, the application is then referred to a group of leaders from the "Evangelical Fraternity of Churches" for review. This group has the power to suggest, but not require, changes. All religious applications also are referred to the State Solicitor's Office for a legal opinion that all elements meet constitutional requirements. Applications almost always meet these requirements. The President ultimately signs the approved resolutions granting juridical personality. The Ministry of Government and Justice did not turn down any applications for juridical personality on behalf of a church during the period covered by this report. The Catholic Church and other recognized churches are accorded tax exemptions and waivers of customs duty on imports.

The Government requires foreign missionaries to obtain permits to enter and reside in the country. A Honduran institution or individual must sponsor a missionary's application for residency, which is submitted to the Ministry of Government and Justice. Permits generally are granted by the Ministry; the resolution granting residency then is registered with the Directorate General of Population and Migration Policy.

There are religious schools and schools operated by churches; they receive no special treatment from the Government, nor do they face any restrictions.

The law allows deportation of foreigners who practice witchcraft or religious fraud.

The Catholic Church is seeking the return of former properties of historic interest confiscated by the government at independence in 1825; however, the Church has not made a formal request to the Government.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In September 2000 the Congress adopted a controversial measure requiring that, beginning in 2001, all school classes begin with 10 minutes of readings from the Bible. Parents who do not want their children to listen to the readings may notify school authorities in writing. The Education Ministry, in consultation with Christian churches, was to establish procedures to select readings, plan their implementation, and promote their distribution. However, as of end of the reporting period the law had not been implemented. Its constitutionality has been questioned by some legal scholars, and doubts have been raised regarding its eventual implementation.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the principal religious communities are amicable. The Catholic Church has designated the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa as the national-level official in charge of ecumenical relations, and the Archbishop has established an ecumenical and interreligious dialog section within his Archdiocese. Catholic and Protestant churches work together through the private Christian Development Commission.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy also maintains a regular dialog with religious leaders, church-sponsored universities, and nongovernmental religious organizations.

JAMAICA

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them; however, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect discrimination on the basis of religious belief or are due to the group's illegal use of marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practice.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 4,243 square miles and its population is approximately 2,652,700.

According to official government statistics compiled during the 1991 census (the latest available figures), 21 percent of the population identify themselves as members of the Church of God, 9 percent as Seventh-Day Adventists, 9 percent as Baptist, 8 percent as Pentecostal, 6 percent as Anglican, 4 percent as Roman Catholic, 3 percent as United Church, 3 percent as Methodist, 2 percent as members of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1 percent as Moravian, 1 percent as Bretheren, 1 percent unstated, and 9 percent as "other." (The category "other" includes Hindus, Jews, and Rastafarians.) Of those surveyed, 24 percent stated that they had no religious affiliation. The majority of those who reported no religion were children.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state or dominant religion. However, Rastafarianism is not a recognized religion under the law.

Legal recognition of a religion is facilitated by an act of Parliament, which can act freely to recognize a religious group. Recognized religious groups receive tax-exempt status and other attendant rights, such as the right of prison visits by clergy. In 1983 Rastafarians unsuccessfully lobbied for recognition by Parliament. In December 2000, the Public Defender's Office (newly created to deal with cases for individuals who have had their constitutional rights violated) said that it would bring a case to the Constitutional Court to gain government recognition of Rastafarianism as a religion; however, it had not yet done so as of June 30, 2001. The Public Defender's Office believes that the court's recognition that Rastafarianism fills several criteria for a religion may help the group gain recognition and various rights.

There are religious schools; they are not subject to any special restrictions and do not receive any special treatment from the Government. Foreign missionaries are subject to no restrictions other than the same immigration laws that govern other foreign visitors.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law enforcement officials unfairly target them; however, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect discrimination on the basis of religious belief or are due to the group's illegal use of marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practice. It is alleged that the police force Rastafarian detainees to cut their hair and surreptitiously give them food that they are forbidden to eat. Rastafarians have no right to prison visits by Rastafarian clergy.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country has a well-established tradition of religious tolerance and diversity. Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. However, members of the Rastafarian community reported isolated incidents of discrimination against them in schools and the workplace.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

MEXICO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions at the local level.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

A generally amicable relationship among the various religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, in some parts of southern Mexico, political, cultural, and religious tensions continued to limit the free practice of religion within some communities. Most such incidents occurred in the state of Chiapas.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 1,220,663 square miles, and its population is approximately 97.48 million.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Computation (INEGI), 87.99 percent of the respondents in the 2000 census identified themselves at least nominally as Roman Catholic. In 1990 approximately 90 percent did so.

There are an estimated 11,000 Roman Catholic churches, and 14,000 ordained Catholic priests and nuns. An additional estimated 90,000 laypersons work in the Catholic Church system.

Other religious categories enumerated in the 2000 census are: Pentecostal and Neopentecostal evangelicals at 1.62 percent; other Protestant Evangelical groups, 2.87 percent; members of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1.25 percent; "historical" Protestants, .71 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists, .58 percent; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), .25 percent; Jewish, .05 percent; and other religions, .31 percent. Press reports have estimated that there are more than 5,000 Protestant churches and 7,000 pastors.

There is no single definitive source on the size of each Protestant denomination. A January 2000 press report indicated that Presbyterians account for 1 percent of the total population; Baptists, 0.1 percent; Methodists, 0.04 percent; Anglicans, 0.1 percent; and Lutherans, 0.01 percent. Official figures sometimes differed from the membership numbers offered by religious groups. For example, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church claims a nationwide membership of 600,000 to 700,000; however, according to the 2000 census only 488,945 persons identified themselves as such. Likewise, some Protestant evangelical groups claim that their coreligionists constitute close to 60 percent of the population in Chiapas state; however, according to the 2000 census only 21.9 percent of respondents in Chiapas identify themselves as Protestant.

In the 2000 census, 3.53 percent of respondents indicated "no religion" and 0.85 percent did not specify a religion.

Of the 5,854 associations registered with the Federal Government, approximately 51 percent are Protestant evangelical and 48.59 percent are non-Protestant Christian, including Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox. Non-Christian organizations represent 0.4 percent of all associations registered. A wide variety of Christian foreign missionary groups operate in the country.

The non-Catholic Christian population is concentrated primarily in the south. According to INEGI figures, Chiapas state, with approximately 4 percent of the country's population, has the largest non-Catholic population at 36.2 percent, compared to the national average of approximately 12 percent. The state of Tabasco's non-Catholics represent approximately 29.6 percent of state residents, followed by Campeche state at approximately 28.7 percent and Quintana Roo state at approximately 26.8 percent.

Some indigenous peoples in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Yucatan practice a syncretistic religion that mixes Catholic and pre-Hispanic Mayan religious beliefs.

In some communities, especially in the south, there is a correlation between political party and religion. Furthermore, whatever their political affiliations, local leaders often manipulate religious tensions in their communities for their own political or economic benefit (see Sections II and III).

Approximately 55 percent of persons surveyed attend religious ceremonies at least once a week; 19 percent, once a month; and 20 percent, less than once a month, according to news reports in 2000.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions. State and municipal governments generally protect this right; however, some local officials infringe on religious freedom, especially in the south.

The Constitution states that everyone is free to profess their chosen religious belief and to practice the ceremonies and acts of worship of their respective belief. Congress may not enact laws that establish or prohibit any religion. The Constitution also provides for the separation of church and state. The 1992 Law on Religious Associations and Public Worship defines the administrative remedies that protect the right to religious freedom.

Religious associations must register with the Under Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Federal Secretariat of Government (SSAR) in order to operate legally. Although the Government rejects a few applications because of incomplete documentation, the registration process is routine. An estimated 5,854 religious associations are registered. During the period covered by this report, the SSAR had registered 205 associations and rejected 2 applications because they did not meet the registration criteria.

To be registered as a religious association, a group must articulate its fundamental doctrines and religious beliefs, must not be organized primarily to make money, and must not promote acts physically harmful or dangerous to its members.

Religious groups must be registered to apply for official building permits, to receive tax exemptions, and to hold religious meetings outside of their places of worship.

The SSAR promotes religious tolerance and investigates cases of religious intolerance. All religious associations have equal access to the SSAR for registering complaints. SSAR officials generally are responsive and helpful in mediating disputes among communities. When parties present a religious dispute to the SSAR, it attempts to mediate a solution acceptable to all. If mediation should fail, the parties can submit the problem to the SSAR for binding arbitration. If the parties do not agree to submit to binding arbitration, one or the other may elect to resort to judicial redress. Destruction of property or causing physical harm to other persons are criminal acts and prosecutable under the law. Municipal and state officials generally are responsive and helpful in mediating disputes among communities. However, when a mediated solution cannot be found, officials are not aggressive in pursuing legal remedies against local leaders (see Section III).

The SSAR investigated 14 cases during 2000 and another 11 during the first half of 2001 and reportedly resolved 11 cases. Of the cases submitted since 1993, 79 remained open at the end of the period covered by this report. The SSAR's new Director of Religious Associations traveled to Chiapas 3 times during the period covered by this report to seek solutions to tensions in various communities. Five states, mostly in the south, have their own under secretaries for religious affairs.

The current situation of religious freedom reflects the historic tensions between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern state. For most of the country's nearly 300 years as a Spanish colony, the Catholic Church involved itself heavily in politics. After independence was won in 1821, the Church's vast wealth and political influence spurred a powerful anticlerical movement that found political expression in the Liberal party. The Catholic Church was opposed to Liberal government policies and supported rebel Conservatives in the mid-19th Century. It later welcomed the country's occupation by a French army. In the early 20th century, the Church's collaboration with the dictator Porfirio Diaz earned it the enmity of the victors in the Mexican Revolution. Consequently, severe restrictions on the rights of the Church and members of the clergy were written into the country's present Constitution. The federal government's attempt to enforce those restrictions in the 1920s led to an open revolt by Catholic peasants and violent Government repression during the 1926-29 Cristero Rebellion.

Tensions between the Church and the State eased after 1940. However, constitutional restrictions were maintained even as enforcement became progressively lax over the ensuing decades. In 1992 the Government reestablished diplomatic relations with the Holy See and lifted almost all restrictions on the Catholic Church. This latter action included granting all religious groups legal status, conceding them limited property rights, and lifting restrictions on the number of priests in the country. However, the law continues to mandate a strict separation of church and state.

Of nine official holidays, two are associated with Christian religious events (Good Friday and Christmas Day). In addition, most employers give holiday leave on Holy Thursday, All Soul's Day, Virgin of Guadalupe Day, and Christmas Eve.

Religious instruction is prohibited in public schools, but religious associations are free to maintain their own private schools, which receive no public funds. Primary level home schooling for religious reasons is neither prohibited nor supported by the law; however, to continue on to a secondary school, one must attend an accredited primary school. The law does not prohibit secondary level home schooling at home.

Religious associations must notify the Government of their intent to hold a religious meeting outside of a licensed place of worship. The Government received 10,629 such notifications during 2000 and the first half of 2001. For the first time, a large scale Protestant evangelical gathering took place in Mexico City's central square on October 14, 2000. According to police, at least 15,000 persons attended, while organizers claimed that 3 times that many were present.

The Government requires religious groups to apply for a permit to construct new buildings or to convert existing buildings into new churches. The Government granted 7,139 such permits between 1992 and August 1998, the period for which most recent statistics are available, and religious groups report no difficulty in obtaining government permission for these activities.

Since assuming office in December 2001, the Secretary of Government has initiated a series of informal dialogs with representatives from various religions to discuss issues of mutual concern. An Interfaith Council, incorporated in 1995, includes official representatives from the Anglican, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Mormon, Lutheran, Protestant, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh Dharma, and Sufi Islam communities.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Constitution bars clergy from holding public office, advocating partisan political views, supporting political candidates, or opposing the laws or institutions of the State.

To visit the country for religious purposes, foreign religious workers must secure government permission. The federal Government limits the number of visas each religious group is allowed. However, the Government has granted more than 30,000 such visas since 1994.

By law religious associations may not own or administer broadcast radio or television stations; however, the Catholic Church owns and operates a national cable television channel. Government permission is required to transmit religious programming on broadcast radio or television, and permission is granted routinely.

There are reports that municipal officials in Chiapas have suspended Protestant evangelical radio programs, including those of the Adventist Church, on technical and administrative grounds, despite the federal government's issuance of a permit. Local officials reportedly claim that the Adventist Church's permit lacks the proper seal.

On October 16, 2000, the director of a secondary school in Monterrey, state of Nuevo Leon, expelled 16 students for not saluting the national flag. The students, members of Jehovah's Witnesses, refused based on their religious beliefs. The State Education Secretariat and the Nuevo Leon Commission of Human Rights reversed the expulsions.

Any building for religious purposes constructed pursuant to a permit after 1992 is the property of the religious association that built it. All religious buildings erected before 1992 (approximately 85,000) are "national patrimony" and owned by the State. From July 1, 2000 to May 2001, the Government decided 769 property claims in favor of churches, which resulted in religious groups gaining 964 properties. The Government has denied 247 property claims since July 1, 2000 and a total of 2,047 since 1993, because the properties in question were deemed to be owned by the State.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In parts of Chiapas, local leaders of indigenous communities sometimes regard evangelical groups and Catholic lay catechists as unwelcome outside influences and potential economic and political threats. While religious differences often were a prominent feature of such incidents, ethnic differences, land disputes, and struggles over local political and economic power were very often the underlying causes of the problems. As a result, these leaders sometimes acquiesced in, or ordered, the harassment or expulsion of individuals belonging primarily, but not exclusively, to Protestant evangelical groups. In past years, expulsions involved the burning of homes and crops, beatings, and, occasionally, killings. However, there were no killings reported during the period covered by this report. On several occasions, village officials temporarily detained Evangelicals for resisting participation in community festivals.

The Chiapas-based Evangelical Commission for the Defense of Human Rights (CEDEH) claims that municipal authorities have expelled 30,000 persons from their communities in the last 30 years, at least partly on religious grounds. However, this report was not corroborated, and a representative from the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) told the press that there are no official statistics on those so displaced.

In late January 2001, local leaders expelled 150 Protestant evangelicals from their homes in Justo Sierra, Chiapas and beat several men, according to the CEDEH. A formal complaint was filed with the state prosecutor's office in Comitán, and on June 27 state judicial police arrested three community officials. The case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

On April 12, 2001, in the community of San Nicolas, Ixmiquilpan municipality, Hidalgo, more than 30 Protestant Evangelical families were threatened by a local official with expulsion by June 18, 2001, if they did not contribute money and cement blocks to a community celebration. Community members beat three persons as they attempted to videotape the water being cut off to six of these families. In addition, one Evangelical reportedly has received a death threat. Despite community meetings mediated by the SSAR, the dispute had not been resolved by end of the period covered by this report, and the local political leader continued to insist that the Protestant Evangelical families owe "community dues." The deadline for expulsion of the families passed without their eviction, although they remained without water service at the end of the period covered by this report.

In July 2000, local leaders reportedly detained four Protestant evangelicals in Tres Cruces for failing to pay a customary fine for having converted to a Protestant

faith and for listening to religious music in their home. The detainees were released once the fine was paid.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In November 2000, the federal Secretariat of Government signed formal agreements with the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Michoacan, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz to promote prompt, efficient, and coordinated action in religious affairs, particularly in response to conflicts caused by religious intolerance.

Since December 2000, the Secretariat of Government has held more than 80 meetings with the leaders of religious groups in an attempt to become familiar with their concerns. In March and May 2001, the SSAR sponsored workshops for Chiapas state authorities on mediation and arbitration as solutions to religious disputes. At the conclusion of the May workshop, Dr. Alvaro Castro Estrada, the SSAR's Director General of Religious Associations, met with 60 religious leaders in Chiapas to discuss religious tolerance and protections afforded by the law.

In April 2001, the Chiapas state government and the CNDH organized a forum on Tolerance and Religious Diversity in San Cristobal de Las Casas. The SSAR also is cooperating with the CNDH and the National Indigenous Institute (INI) to increase tolerance among communities in the south. On June 13, 2001, these three agencies signed an agreement to cooperate on public education, diagnostic studies on religious disputes, and training and awareness-raising workshops. In addition, the SSAR is exploring ways to involve university law schools in the mediation process in areas of tension.

According to a representative of the Catholic Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, the situation for their foreign visitors improved significantly in 2001. Unlike in previous years, foreign clergy and visitors to the Diocese have been able to arrange their immigration status easily and received prompt attention from the relevant government authorities. For example, Father Loren Riebe, expelled from Chiapas in 1995 along with two other foreign priests, returned to San Cristobal in April 2001 for a conference. The social and political situation in Chiapas remains tense, but the new bishop of San Cristobal, is said to enjoy a more productive relationship with state officials than did his predecessor.

Representatives of Protestant organizations in both Mexico City and Chiapas reported that interfaith understanding has improved at the highest levels, and there were several reports of improvements at the local level. According to CEDEH, syncretist Catholics and Protestant evangelicals in at least 20 parishes are cooperating on development projects that serve their entire communities.

On August 3, 2000, Protestant Evangelical and Catholic representatives in Oaxaca ended 47 years of tension between their communities by signing a peace accord in Santiago Jaltepec. Under this accord, the evangelical community promised to respect the town's religious customs and traditions as well as the local assembly's laws. The Catholic community and local authorities promised to integrate the Evangelists into the local assembly and to respect their constitutional rights and individual freedoms. In addition, development aid that had been confiscated by the local authorities was returned to the evangelical community.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religions; however, there is religious intolerance in, and expulsions from, certain indigenous communities, particularly those in Chiapas, whose residents follow syncretistic (Catholic/Mayan) religious practices (See Section II). Competition for adherents has contributed to tension among various religious groups, particularly in the South. Syncretistic practices are not merely an extension of religious belief, but also the basis for the social and cultural life of the community. Therefore, other religious practices are perceived as different and strange, and also are seen as threats to indigenous culture. Endemic poverty, land tenure disputes, and lack of educational opportunities also contribute to tensions in many of these communities. This tension has, at times, resulted in violence. In some southern indigenous communities, abandoning syncretistic practices for Protestant beliefs is perceived as a threat to the unique identity of that community.

In parts of Chiapas, local leaders of indigenous communities sometimes acquiesced in, or ordered, the harassment or expulsion of individuals belonging primarily,

but not exclusively, to Protestant evangelical groups (See Section II). Abuses related to these incidents apparently did not occur solely on the basis of religion. While religious differences were often a prominent feature of such incidents, ethnic differences, land disputes, and struggles over local political and economic power very often were the underlying causes of the problems. The most common incidents of intolerance arose in connection with traditional community celebrations. Protestant evangelicals often resist making financial donations demanded by community norms that will go partly to local celebrations of Catholic religious holidays, and resist participating in festivals involving alcohol.

There were a number of significant cases of religious intolerance caused by societal attitudes during the period covered by this report, the majority of which occurred in Chiapas. For example, about 130 children of Protestant evangelicals have been denied access to the local public schools in 6 communities in the municipality of San Juan Chamula every year since 1994. When local officials investigated, school officials reportedly denied the accusations and claimed that Evangelical parents were not sending their children to school.

Ninety-seven Evangelicals from Icaluntic returned to their homes in 2000 and received compensation for damages; however, the situation remains tense. The Evangelicals reported receiving threats and warnings that they risked being expelled again.

In July 2000, syncretist Catholics expelled 29 Protestant Evangelical families in Plan de Ayala and destroyed 14 of their homes. The state sent 400 police officers to restore order. Syncretists blocked the road to the community and threw stones as the police forced their way through. The state prosecutor pledged to hold accountable those responsible for the expulsions, and the authorities charged 16 individuals with blocking the roadway and injuring 3 police officers. On July 23, state authorities and community representatives signed an agreement allowing the families to return but forcing them to relocate 3 miles away from their original houses. The situation reportedly has calmed considerably but remained tense at the end of the period covered by this report.

In August 2000, three persons were detained in Paste for refusing to participate in a local celebration. Members of the syncretistic community burned their homes while the three were in detention. However, this report could not be confirmed.

The Adventist Church reported that individuals in the communities of Vicente Guerrero and Juan Sabines have complained that the opening of an Adventist church in neighboring Francisco I. Madero, Tecpatan municipality would violate local "uses and customs." In March 2001, Francisco I. Madero residents requested local government assistance in relieving tension among the communities and convincing the neighboring communities of the Adventists' right to use their place of worship. This report could not be corroborated.

In May 2001, four other incidents of intolerance were reported, three in Chiapas and one in Puebla state. In two Chiapas communities, Protestant evangelicals reportedly were detained by community members for failing to make financial donations in support of the syncretistic Catholic celebration of Santa Cruz. Adventists in Tapachula were accused of playing loud music in front of Catholic churches while Mass was being conducted, allegedly infringing upon the rights of their neighbors to unimpeded worship. Finally, in a Puebla community, an Adventist pastor was threatened while proselytizing.

Government officials, the national ombudsman, and interfaith groups are conducting discussions about incidents of intolerance in some parts of the south, in order to promote social peace.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Throughout the reporting period Embassy staff have met with government officials, staff of non-governmental organizations, and members of religious groups to discuss and raise religious freedom issues.

Throughout the period covered by this report, Embassy staff met frequently with officials in the Subsecretariat for Religious Affairs within the Secretariat of Government to discuss religious freedom. On trips throughout the country, Embassy staff met religious leaders including the Cardinal of Guadalajara, the Vicar and the Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, and leaders of the Chiapas-based Buen Samaritano Evangeli Group. The Embassy was in contact with the National Human Rights Commission, the president of the Evangelical Commission in Defense of Human Rights and the Mexican Episcopal Conference (Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference) to discuss religious freedom issues. Embassy staff also visited the Direc-

tor General of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and representatives of U.S. faith-based organizations in Mexico City to become familiar with their concerns.

NICARAGUA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributes to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has an area of 49,997.8 square miles, and its population is approximately 4.8 million.

Over 90 percent of the population belong to one of the Christian denominations. According to the most recent census, conducted in 1995, 72.9 percent of the population were members of the Roman Catholic Church, 15.1 percent were members of evangelical churches, 1.5 percent were members of the Moravian Church, and 0.1 percent were members of the Episcopal Church. An additional 1.9 percent were associated with other churches or religious groups, and 8.5 percent professed no religious affiliation or were atheistic. Some more recent church figures differ from the official census information; for example, the Episcopal Church claims a membership of nearly twice the census figure, and the evangelical churches also have made credible claims of higher current membership.

The total number of citizens who practice a religion other than Christianity is extremely small. There are small communities of non-Christians, including a small Jewish community that gathers for religious holidays and Friday evening dinners but does not have an ordained rabbi or a synagogue. In 1979 many of the country's approximately 250 Jews fled abroad in the face of persecution and imprisonment by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The FSLN bombed and partially destroyed the country's only synagogue, then confiscated the property shortly afterward and converted it into a youth training camp. There is now a funeral home on the site. Some Jews have returned since the Sandinista Government was ousted democratically in 1990, but the total Jewish population of the country consists of fewer than 50 persons.

There is a small number of Muslims as well—primarily foreigners, or naturalized Nicaraguans from Iran, Libya, and Palestine who immigrated to Nicaragua in the 1980's—but there is no mosque.

Minority religions also include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Amish and Mennonite communities, the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Scientology. Although these religions are perceived as foreign, the Government neither monitors them nor alerts the public to their presence.

Other immigrant groups include the "Turcos"—Palestinian Christians whose ancestors came to Central America in the early 1900's, and the Chinese, who came to the country in large numbers shortly after World War II but many of whom fled at the time of the 1979 revolution. Chinese-Nicaraguans either arrived as Christians or converted to Christianity, and intermarried frequently with native Nicaraguans.

There are no longer any pre-Colombian religions in the country, although there is a "freedom movement" within some Moravian churches to allow indigenous Amerindian spiritual expression, often through music. The Catholic Church is the most syncretistic of the denominations and does not criticize or interfere with non-Christian aspects of religious festivals held in its name. For example, each August up to 30,000 persons—many of them painted red or coated in motor oil—gather to carry "Dominguito," a sacred 10-inch statue of Saint Dominic, from his home church in a suburb of Managua to another church downtown. A week later the revelers reconvene to carry the statue back. Such events have historical roots that go back to pre-Colombian times.

Geographically Moravian and Episcopal communities are concentrated on the Atlantic coast, while Catholicism and evangelical churches dominate the Pacific and central regions. There is a strong correlation between ethnicity and religion: blacks

and Amerindians, generally from the Atlantic coast, are more likely to belong to the Moravian or Episcopal Church. Some evangelical churches have focused on the booming, remote towns of the central South Atlantic Region and have a strong presence there.

The evangelical churches are growing rapidly, especially in poor and/or remote areas. For example, in 1980 the Assemblies of God had 80 churches and fewer than 5,000 members. According to church leader Saturnino Cerato, as of May 15, 2001, they had 730 churches and approximately 124,000 baptized members.

Anecdotal evidence points to proportionally higher church attendance among members of the new evangelical churches than among members of the Catholic and traditional Protestant churches. In the poorer neighborhoods, the small evangelical churches are filled to capacity nearly every evening. According to a Catholic Church official, the Catholic Church is growing numerically but losing ground proportionally.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country. The Mormons have 178 missionaries, the Unification Church has 6 families of missionaries, and nearly all of the non-Catholic denominations have at least 1 missionary family in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution also states that no one “shall be obligated by coercive measures to declare their ideology or beliefs.”

The Roman Catholic Church is not an official state religion; however, it enjoys a close relationship with the secular Government. The Roman Catholic Church is the most politically active religious denomination and has significant political influence. Catholic Church leaders routinely meet with senior government officials. The historical position of the Church is such that most religiously affiliated monuments and memorials are Catholic-related. However, the predominance of the Catholic Church does not impact negatively on the religious freedom of others.

The Government’s requirements for legal recognition of a church are similar to its requirements for other nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s). A church must apply for “Personeria Juridica” (legal standing), which must be approved by the National Assembly. Following Assembly approval, a church must register with the Ministry of Government as an association or a foundation.

A recognized church can be granted tax-exempt status, known as exoneration. Exonerated churches are exempt from customs duties on imported goods donated for humanitarian purposes. Goods donated to established churches and other nonprofit religious organizations recognized by the Government, and that are intended for the exclusive use of the church or organization, are eligible for exonerated status. Prior to 1997, the Government provided exonerated churches with a letter confirming their tax-exempt status. A church could obtain customs clearance for imported donated goods by presenting its exemption letter. However, in 1997 the Government implemented a new customs regime that required clearance from the Office of External Cooperation, the Ministry of Finance, the Customs Office, and the municipality in which the donated goods would be used before a tax exemption could be approved and the goods released.

A number of churches and other nonprofit religious organizations, including the Lutheran Church, the Moravian Church, and the Council of Evangelical Churches, reported bureaucratic delays in obtaining exonerated status from customs duties for humanitarian aid in the form of donated goods. Some non-Catholic churches complained that the Catholic Church was receiving favored treatment in this regard and in practice did not face the same bureaucratic requirements applied to other religious and humanitarian organizations. However, some Catholic groups, including Catholic Relief Services, reported similar bureaucratic problems in obtaining exonerated status from duties on donated goods. The Government published additional, more specific guidelines in April and June 1999 in an attempt to address these problems, but the issue remained controversial during the period covered by this report.

Missionaries do not face any special requirements other than the appropriate visa—the “religious worker” visa—which is given freely to everyone who follows the application guidelines. The process of obtaining a religious worker visa takes several months and must be completed before the missionary arrives in the country. During the period covered by this report, there were no reports of difficulties by missionaries in obtaining the proper visa.

Private religious schools operate in the country. The Government provides financial support to a number of primary and secondary schools owned and directed by the Catholic Church by paying the salaries of teachers at these schools.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religions are very different on the two coasts. On the Atlantic side, where the three dominant churches are the Moravian, Episcopal, and Catholic Churches, there is an ecumenical spirit. The churches even are known to celebrate the Eucharist together. However, on the Pacific side, ecumenism is rare, and there is continuing and energetic competition for adherents between the Catholic Church and the evangelical churches.

Both the Catholic bishops and the leading evangelical leaders showed signs of a desire to work together more closely during the period covered by this report. In October 2000, Catholic Church officials, evangelical pastors, and others organized a highly publicized march against legalized abortion. The Catholic and evangelical leaders were working together to prevent the passage of a legislative bill legalizing abortion. Thus far, the legislation has not been approved.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights, and also maintains a regular dialog with the principal religious leaders and organizations.

PANAMA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, with some qualifications; however, the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 30,193 square miles and its population is an estimated 2.8 million.

According to a 1998 nationwide survey by the Comptroller General's Office of Statistics and Census, 82 percent of the population identify themselves as Roman Catholic, 10 percent as evangelical, and 3 percent as unaffiliated with any religious group. There are also small but statistically identifiable congregations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Episcopalians, and other Christians. Many recent Chinese immigrants still practice Buddhism. The country has small but influential Jewish and Muslim communities, and is home to one of the world's seven Baha'i Houses of Worship.

Many religious organizations have foreign religious workers in Panama. For example, as of June 1999, the Southern Baptist Convention had 22 foreign missionaries in Panama, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) had 197.

Foreign missionaries are granted temporary 3-month religious worker visas upon submitting required paperwork, which includes an HIV/AIDS test and a police certificate of good conduct. A 1-year extension customarily is granted with the submission of additional, less onerous, documentation. Foreign religious workers who in-

tend to remain in the country more than 15 months must repeat the entire process. Such additional extensions usually are granted.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for free exercise of all religious beliefs, provided that “Christian morality and public order” are respected; however, despite the qualified nature of this right, the Government generally respects religious freedom in practice.

The Constitution recognizes Roman Catholicism as “the religion of the majority of Panamanians” but does not designate the Roman Catholic Church as the official state religion. Roman Catholicism’s numerical predominance and “unofficial” recognition by the Constitution generally has not prejudiced other religions. However, Catholicism does enjoy certain state-sanctioned advantages over other faiths. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Panama—but no other religious leader—enjoys privileges and immunities usually reserved for government officials.

The Constitution provides that religious associations have “juridical capacity” and are free to manage and administer their property within the limits prescribed by the law, the same as other “juridical persons.” The Ministry of Government and Justice grants “juridical personality” through a relatively simple, transparent process that does not appear to prejudice religious institutions. Juridical personality allows a religion to apply for the full array of tax benefits available to nonprofit organizations. There were no reports of cases in which religious organizations were denied juridical personality or the associated tax benefits.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Foreign missionaries are granted temporary 3-month religious worker visas upon submitting required paperwork, which includes an AIDS test and a police certificate of good conduct. A 1-year extension customarily is granted with the submission of additional, less onerous, documentation. Foreign religious workers who intend to remain in the country more than 15 months must repeat the entire process. Such additional extensions usually are granted. Catholic religious workers from outside the country benefit from a streamlined administrative process that grants them 5-year work permits.

The Panamanian General Directorate for Immigration and Naturalization no longer grants religious worker visas or work permits to members of the Unification Church. Officials based their decision on allegedly deceptive religious worker visa applications, as well as certain Unification Church practices (such as mass marriages) that officials believed ran contrary to the constitutional requirement that religious conduct respect Christian morality. The Unification Church has not appealed the decision.

The Constitution dictates that Catholicism be taught in public schools, although parents have the right to exempt their children from religious instruction.

The Constitution disadvantages ministers of religious faiths in general by strictly limiting the type of public offices they may hold. The Constitution prohibits clerics from holding public office, except as related to social assistance, education, or scientific research.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the different, mostly Christian, faiths are generally harmonious. The Roman Catholic Church, despite losing membership through growing defections to evangelical and other Christian churches, generally has not reacted defensively. Similarly, most Protestant groups active in the country are not militantly anti-Catholic. Aggressive evangelical Protestant criticism of “new” religions, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses), is not widespread.

For the past 17 years, mainstream denominations, including the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Methodist Churches, have participated in a successful ecumenical movement directed by the nongovernmental Panamanian Ecumenical Committee. The Committee sponsors interreligious conferences to discuss matters of faith and practice and plans joint liturgical celebrations and charitable projects. In conjunc-

tion with the University of Santa Maria la Antigua, the Committee sponsors the Institute for Ecumenicism and Society, which conducts its own conferences and issues ecumenical publications. The Ecumenical Committee is also a member of the Panamanian Civil Society Assembly, an umbrella group of civic organizations that conducts informal governmental oversight and has been the driving force behind ethical pacts on the treatment of women and youth, civil society, responsible journalism, and decentralization.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials also have met with religious leaders to discuss human rights and the promotion of democracy and civil society.

PARAGUAY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 158,886 square miles, and its population is approximately 5,586,000 persons (2000 estimate).

An estimated 90 percent of the population are Roman Catholic. There are active Catholic, mainline Protestant, evangelical Christian, Jewish (both Orthodox and Reform congregations), Mormon, Muslim, and Baha'i communities in the country. There also are sizable Mennonite communities, whose members originally came to the country in order to escape religious persecution. These communities came to the country in several waves between 1880 and 1950.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion for all persons, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

All religious groups must be registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture, but the Government imposes no controls on these groups and many informal churches exist.

The Government is secular. Most government officials are Christian. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote interfaith understanding. Adherence to a particular creed confers no legal advantage or disadvantage, and foreign and local missionaries proselytize freely.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While there is no large-scale ecumenical movement in the country, all religious groups freely exercise their beliefs in a largely tolerant environment. The Catholic

Church often performs Mass for government functions, Protestant and evangelical churches engage in marches and prayer vigils, and part of the Jewish community holds a large public menorah lighting every year for Hannukah.

The Catholic Church is involved in politics at the fringe, mostly in socio-economic matters, and does not support any particular political party. The Church freely criticizes the Government.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Ambassador and embassy officials meet regularly with representatives of different religious groups.

PERU

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Constitution recognizes the Catholic Church's role as "an important element in the historical, cultural, and moral development of the nation." Preferential treatment given to the Catholic Church in education, tax benefits, and other areas continued to raise concerns about potential infringements of religious liberties of non-Catholics. In December 2000, approximately 90 members of various non-Catholic churches lost a case pending before the Supreme Court challenging mandatory religious education in public schools by teachers appointed by the Catholic dioceses.

The generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 798,635 square miles and its population is approximately 27,013,000. Nearly all major religions and religious organizations are represented in the country. The Cuanto Institute, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that provides demographic information, estimates that approximately 80 percent of the population identify themselves as Roman Catholics, although an official of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action (CEAS) estimates that only about 15 percent of the country's Roman Catholics attend church services on a weekly basis. Approximately 7.5 percent of the population identify themselves as Protestant, the majority of which are Pentecostal or evangelical. This 7.5 percent also includes non-evangelical Christians such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The 1993 census (the latest official figures available) found that adherents of non-Christian religions, including Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Shintoists, accounted for less than 0.3 percent of the population, while agnostics and atheists constituted 1.4 percent of the population.

There are a number of Catholics who combine native indigenous worship with the Catholic traditions. This type of syncretistic religion is practiced most often in the highlands.

Foreign missionary groups, including the Mormons and several evangelical organizations, operate freely throughout the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Constitution establishes the separation of church and state; however, the Constitution recognizes the Catholic Church's role as "an important element in the historical, cultural, and moral development of the nation." The State thus maintains a close relationship with the Church and grants it a privileged status. The dominant status accorded to Roman Catholicism in public life manifests itself in various ways.

All faiths are free to establish places of worship, train clergy, and proselytize. Religious denominations or churches are not required to register with the Government or apply for a license. There is a small Religious Affairs Unit within the Ministry of Justice whose primary purpose is to receive institutional complaints of discrimination from the various churches. This unit also ensures that beyond the historic preferences (subsidies and exemptions granted to the Catholic Church only), all denominations and churches receive a variety of financial benefits, such as exemption from certain import taxes and customs duties for which they are eligible. The Unit did not receive any discrimination complaints during the period covered by this report.

Roman Catholicism, the Catholic Church, and Catholic clergy receive preferential treatment and tangible benefits from the State in the areas of education, taxation of personal income, remuneration, and taxation of institutional property.

Conversion from one religion to another is respected, and missionaries are allowed to enter the country and proselytize. Some non-Catholic missionary groups claim that a law discriminated against them by taxing religious materials, including Bibles, that they bring in to the country, while the Catholic Church has not been taxed on such items.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

All work-related earnings of Catholic priests and bishops are exempt from income taxes. Real estate, buildings, and houses owned by the Catholic Church are exempt from property taxes. Two groups of Catholic clergy receive state remuneration in addition to the compensation paid them by the Catholic Church. These include the country's 52 bishops as well as those priests whose ministries are located in towns and villages along the country's borders. Finally, each diocese receives a monthly institutional subsidy from the Government. According to church officials, none of these payments are substantial. However, the Freedom of Conscience Institute (PROLIBCO), an NGO that favors the strict separation between church and state and opposes the preferential treatment accorded to the Catholic religion, claims that the financial subsidies and tax benefits are far more widespread and lucrative than publicly acknowledged. PROLIBCO also has alleged government discrimination against non-Catholic groups that must pay import duties and a sales tax on Bibles brought into the country. In May the Jehovah's Witnesses claimed that the Government denied them tax-exemption for imported donations of Bibles and other religious educational materials.

Since 1977 the Ministry of Education has required Catholic religious teaching as part of public and private primary school curriculum. Some non-Catholic or secular private schools have been granted exemptions from this requirement. In April 1998, the Government issued an executive order that established basic Catholic religion courses for all primary school students. In 1999 the Education Ministry issued a directive to implement a 1998 decree that made it mandatory for school authorities to appoint religious education teachers upon individual recommendations and approval by the presiding bishop of the local diocese.

Parents who do not wish their children to participate in the mandatory religion classes must request an exemption in writing from the school principal. Such requests are granted infrequently. Non-Catholics who wish their children to receive a religious education in their own faith are free to organize such classes, at their own expense, during the weekly hour allotted by the school for religious education, but must supply their own teacher. PROLIBCO objects to the requirement for Catholic teaching in the school curriculum, and claims that the alternatives available to non-Catholic parents violate the constitutional protection of privacy and confidentiality of one's convictions and beliefs. PROLIBCO led a challenge by approximately 90 persons from various non-Catholic churches to this education practice in the Supreme Court and lost the case in December 2000. In May PROLIBCO presented its case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The results of the IACHR were pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among members of the various religions generally are amicable. Religious groups occasionally join forces in ecumenical works on behalf of the poor. The Catholic and evangelical churches collaborate closely in the area of human rights.

The Catholic Church (through the CEAS) and the National Evangelical Council of Peru (through its loosely affiliated, although independent, Peace and Hope Evangelical Association) have conducted joint national campaigns on behalf of prison inmates and prisoners wrongly charged or sentenced for terrorism and treason.

The Catholic Church is the most politically active religious denomination and has significant political influence. During the period covered by this report, at the request of the Government and because of the Church's reputation for honesty, prominent members of the Church played a pivotal role in democratization and anticorruption initiatives.

Unlike in previous years, during the period covered by this report there were no reports of incidents of anti-Semitism and discrimination. In the past, Jewish community leaders in Lima have claimed that a number of the capital city's most prestigious private social clubs have refused to accept into their ranks prospective Jewish members.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. During the period covered by this report, embassy staff members met with leaders of many of the religious communities, including representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish community, and Protestant leaders. In addition, the Embassy maintains regular contact with religious and nonreligious organizations that are involved in the protection of human rights, including the CEAS, the Peace and Hope Evangelical Association, and the Freedom of Conscience Institute.

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

St. Kitts and Nevis, a two-island federation, located at the northern end of the Leeward island chain of the West Indies has a total land area of 104 square miles. Its overall population is approximately 41,570, with an estimated 34,800 persons on St. Kitts 68 square miles and an estimated 6,770 persons on Nevis' 36 square miles. Approximately 96 percent of the population are of African descent with most adhering to the Anglican belief. Racially diverse minority worshippers are members of Catholic, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah Witnesses, Rastafarian and other faiths or beliefs.

The dominant religion is Christianity (mostly Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Moravian), but religious freedom for others is not affected adversely. There is a Baha'i minority.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not interfere with an individual's right to worship. Christian holy

days, such as Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas, are national holidays. The Government does not take any steps to promote interfaith understanding.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The Federation's citizens have a history of being open and tolerant of all faiths. Although the society is dominated by Christian attitudes, values, and mores, citizens respect the rights of followers of minority religions such as Baha'is, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, local groups, and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ST. LUCIA

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

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

St. Lucia is an island with a total area of 238 square miles and a population of approximately 138,000. The dominant religion is Christianity, and some 80 percent of the island's residents are Roman Catholic. There also are Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist and Jehovah's Witnesses communities. Small minority religions include the Baha'i Faith and Rastafarianism.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular, but most government officials are Christian. The Government does not interfere with an individual's right to worship. Christian holy days such as Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas are national holidays. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote interfaith understanding.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

In September 2000, customs authorities temporarily detained a visiting publisher entering the country after seizing a number of books he was carrying that reflected religious themes. Book titles included: *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, *The Greater Key of Solomon*, *The Lost Books of the Bible*, and *The Ancient Mysteries of Melchizedek*. The books were seized and reviewed under laws that ban importing immoral or pornographic materials.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On December 31, 2000, two men, alleged to be members of the Rastafarian movement, attacked a Sunday Mass in a Catholic Church. They killed a nun, set the priest on fire, and wounded 12 other persons. The authorities charged the men with murder and arson. The trial was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report. Rastafarian leaders criticized the attack, and Archdiocese representatives criticized what they termed “an atmosphere of intolerance” and a “callous disrespect for authority” in the country. The Government criticized the attack as the work of mentally disturbed persons who underscored the plight of “impoverished and marginalized youth” alienated from societal norms.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. The St. Lucia Christian Council conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government, local groups, and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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

There was no change to 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 the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The island of St. Vincent and a chain of smaller islands, the Grenadines, have a total area of 150 square miles; the population is approximately 108,000. The dominant religion is Christianity (Anglican, Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Pentecostal). The minority religions are Islam, the Baha’i Faith, and Rastafarianism.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular and most government officials are Christian, but the Government does not interfere with an individual’s right to worship. Christian holy days such as Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas are national holidays. The Government does not take any particular steps to promote interfaith understanding.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. Members of the Rastafarian community have complained that law officials unfairly target them. However, it is not clear whether such complaints reflect

discrimination on the basis of religious belief by authorities or simply enforcement of laws against marijuana, which is used as part of Rastafarian religious practice.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities are generally amicable. However, some members of society do not regard Rastafarianism favorably because of its popular association with drug use. The Christian Council of Churches conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom with the Government, local groups, and other organizations in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SURINAME

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 63,037 square miles, and its population is approximately 450,000.

Slightly over one-third of the population traces its ancestry to the Indian subcontinent, another third is of African descent, another fifteen to twenty percent claim Indonesian ancestry, and there are smaller percentages of the population that claim Chinese, Amerindian, Portuguese, Lebanese, and Dutch ancestry. Religious diversity in the country closely parallels the ethnic diversity of the population.

According to government statistics, 45 percent of the population is Christian (23 percent Roman Catholic, 16 percent Moravian, and 6 percent other denominations such as Lutheran, Dutch Reformed and the Evangelical Churches), 27 percent is Hindu, 20 percent is Muslim, 6 percent follow native religions, and 2 percent claim no faith.

A large number of faiths, including U.S.-based church groups, have established missionary programs throughout the country. It is estimated that nearly 90 percent of the American missionaries are affiliated with the Baptist Church, with a small percentage of followers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) also present. There are several groups of Druids. In addition to U.S.-based groups, there are international groups such as the World Islamic Call Society and the Baha'i Faith.

Many political parties have strong ethnic ties, and religious beliefs often follow ethnic lines; therefore, some political parties are predominantly made up of one faith. However, all political parties have members of different religions, and there is no requirement that political party leaders or members must follow a particular religion.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this

right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state or otherwise dominant religion.

Members of all the various faiths in the country are allowed to worship freely. Religions are not required to register with the Government.

The military maintains a chaplaincy that performs inter-faith services in Hinduism, Islam, and Catholicism. Military members are also welcome to visit other religious services in town.

Aside from the standard requirement for an entry visa, missionary workers face no special governmental restrictions. The Government has encouraged and, where possible, supported the various groups without showing special preference to any one group in particular.

The government education system provides limited subsidies to a number of public elementary and secondary schools established and managed by the various religious faiths. While the teachers at the schools are civil servants, and the schools are considered public schools, religious groups provide all funding with the exception of teachers' salaries and a small maintenance stipend.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the country's various religious communities are amicable. Most citizens, especially those living in Paramaribo, celebrate the religious holidays of other groups to varying extents.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

The status of religious freedom improved with the passage of a bill that removes criminal offenses relating to certain religious practices.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 1,980 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.3 million.

There is no dominant faith among the multiethnic population, which is 40 percent African and 40 percent East Indian; the remainder are of European, Syrian, Lebanese, and Chinese descent. According to the latest official statistics (1990), about 29 percent of the population are practicing or nominally Roman Catholic; 24 percent are Hindu; 6 percent are Muslim; and 31 percent are Protestant (including 11 percent Anglican, 7 percent Pentecostal, 4 percent Seventh-Day Adventist, 3 percent Presbyterian/Congregational, and 3 percent Baptist). A small number of individuals follow Obeah and other traditional Caribbean religions with African roots; sometimes these are practiced together with other faiths.

Foreign missionaries present include members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Baptists, Mennonites, and Muslims. The Mormons maintain the maximum total allowed (30) of foreign missionaries per religious denomination in the country, while other denominations maintain between 5 and 10 foreign missionaries.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

To receive tax-exempt donations or gifts of land, religious groups must register with the Government, which requires them to demonstrate that they are nonprofit. Religious groups have the same rights and obligations as most legal entities, whether or not they are registered. They can own land but must pay property taxes, and they can hire employees but must pay for government-mandated employee benefits.

The 1999 Orisa Marriage Act allows registered marriage officers of Orisa faith to conduct marriages, which are recognized as legally binding by the Government. Previously only Christian, Hindu, and Moslem prelates could be licensed marriage officers.

There is a limit of 30 foreign missionaries per religious denomination.

The Government subsidizes religious and public schools. It also permits religious instruction in public schools, setting aside a time each week when any religious organization that has an adherent in the school can provide an instructor in its faith. Attendance at these classes is voluntary.

Following national elections in December 2000, Prime Minister Basdeo Panday reorganized several ministries and added to the Ministry of Education the portfolio of moral, ethical, and spiritual values.

Government officials routinely speak out against religious intolerance and generally take care not to favor any one religion publicly. The Government has set aside public holidays for every religion with significant followings, including Christians, Hindus, and Muslims, as well as for the relatively small number of Baptists.

The Government does not formally sponsor programs that promote interfaith dialog; however, it supports the activities of the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO), which brings together representatives from most of the country's religions. The IRO, which was formed about 30 years ago by several religious leaders, is called upon routinely to provide the prayer leader for several official events, such as the opening of parliament and of the annual court term.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. Foreign missionaries operate relatively freely in the country; however, the Government limits the number of foreign missionaries allowed to enter the country to 30 per religious denomination. Missionaries must meet standard requirements for an entry visa, must represent a registered religious group, and cannot remain in the country for more than 3 years.

The Government is known to monitor closely only one religiously affiliated group, a radical Muslim organization called the Jamaat al Muslimeen, some members of which attempted a coup in 1990. The Government's surveillance has focused on the group's repeated attempts to seize control of state-owned property adjoining its central mosque and on any actions intended to incite revolt. In January 2001, a court ordered the Jamaat to pay the Government more than \$3 million for damage done to public buildings during the 1990 coup attempt. In May 2001, the court ruled on a counter-suit and awarded the Jamaat approximately \$350,000 for destruction of its facilities during the same coup.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In October 2000, the legislature passed a Government-sponsored Equal Opportunities Bill, which prohibits acts that offend or insult another person or group on the grounds of race, origin, or religion, or which incite racial or religious hatred. Previously the law, a legacy of British colonialism, protected only Christian groups from blasphemous libel.

In November 2000, Parliament passed a separate bill, the Miscellaneous Laws Act, that amended certain provisions of existing legislation that had discriminated against the religious practices of the Spiritual Shouter Baptist and Orisa faiths. This Act removes references to "church" and "chapel" and replaces them with the term "buildings set apart for religious worship." Similarly, the terms "clergyman or

minister” are replaced by “religious head or official.” Criminal statutes also have been amended to remove references to Obeah and to “beating drums, blowing horns, and dancing in a street, highway or other place,” which discriminated against certain religious practices. The Act also repeals the authority given to police to enter any location to investigate and arrest persons practicing Orisa or Shouter Baptist worship rituals, protects all religions against blasphemy, and provides for prosecution of the desecration of any place of worship.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country’s various religious groups peacefully coexist and generally respect each other’s beliefs and practices. Followers of one faith often participate in public celebrations of another faith, most notably in the Hindu celebration of Divali. The IRO, which is composed of leaders from all faiths with significant followings except for the Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Mormons (who have not expressed an interest in membership because of doctrinal differences), promotes interfaith dialog and tolerance through study groups, publications, and cultural and religious shows and exhibitions. No group is excluded from membership in the IRO.

Complaints occasionally are made about the efforts of some groups to proselytize in neighborhoods where another religion is dominant. The most frequent public complaints have been lodged by Hindu religious leaders against evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. Such clashes mirror the racial tensions that at times arise between the Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian communities.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

URUGUAY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 68,000 square miles and its population is estimated at 3.2 million. Over one-half of the population lives in Montevideo and surrounding areas. About 52 percent of the population are practicing or nominally Roman Catholic, 16 percent are Protestant or belong to another Christian denomination, approximately 1 percent are Jewish, and 30 percent are members of other religions or profess no religion.

The mainstream Protestant minority is composed primarily of Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, and Baptists. Other denominations and groups include evangelicals, Pentecostals, Mennonites, Eastern Orthodox, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) claims 65,000 members. There are approximately 30,000 practicing Jews who support 15 synagogues.

A 1998 poll revealed that 13 percent of the population identified themselves as atheists or agnostics, with a significant percentage identifying themselves as deists. Some of the country’s 6 percent African-Uruguayan population, primarily those with roots in Brazil, practice animism.

The Unification Church is active in the country and has major property holdings. There also is a Muslim population that lives primarily on the border with Brazil. Approximately 4,000 Baha’is live in Montevideo.

Many Christian groups perform missionary work in the country. For example, the Mormons have approximately 365 missionaries in the country at any one time.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIONS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is a strict separation of church and state, which dates from the beginning of the 20th century. Under the influence of reformist President Jose Batlle y Ordonez, religious instruction in the schools was banned in 1909, and separation of church and state was included in the 1917 Constitution and reaffirmed in the current 1967 Constitution. All religions are entitled to receive tax exemptions on their houses of worship, and there were no reports of difficulties in receiving these exemptions. Houses of worship must register to get tax exemptions. To do so, a religion or minority religious group must register as a nonprofit entity and draft organizing statutes. It then applies to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which examines the legal entity and grants religious status. The group must reapply every 5 years. Once it has status granted to it by the Ministry, it can request an exemption each year from the taxing body, which is usually the municipal government.

Religious instruction in public schools is prohibited. The public schools allow students who belong to minority religions to miss school for religious holidays without penalty. There are private schools, mainly Catholic and Jewish, to serve their respective religious communities.

The Government does not take any steps to promote interfaith understanding. Missionaries face no special requirements or restrictions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable. The Christian-Jewish Council meets regularly to promote interfaith understanding. In addition, the mainstream Protestant religions meet regularly among themselves and with the Catholic Church.

Isolated neo-Nazi elements have carried out occasional, limited attacks since 1997. Law enforcement authorities have responded vigorously to such activities. In September 2000, the police arrested and charged with inciting racial hatred the leader of a small neo-Nazi group believed responsible for distributing pro-Nazi propaganda. Because this was the suspect's first offense, he benefited from a general amnesty applied to first offenders and after spending several months in jail, was released in late 2000 and the case against him provisionally was closed.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

During the period covered by this report, embassy staff members met with human rights and religious nongovernmental organizations and with leaders of many of the religious communities, including representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish community, and Mormon and Protestant leaders.

The Embassy maintains frequent contact with religious and nonreligious organizations that are involved in the protection of human rights, such as the Center for Documentation, Investigation, and Social and Pastoral Promotion (OBSUR), Service of Peace and Justice (SERPAJ), Ecumenical Service for Human Dignity (SEOHU), Institute for Legal and Social Studies of Uruguay (ILSUR), and Mundo Afro, which represents the interests of citizens of African descent.

VENEZUELA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 350,000 square miles and its population is approximately 24.5 million. According to the latest government figures, in 2000 approximately 70 percent of the population were Roman Catholic, approximately 29 percent were Protestant, and the remaining 1 percent practiced other religions or were atheists. There are small but influential Muslim and Jewish communities. The capital city of Caracas has a large mosque, and the country's Jewish community is very active. According to the Government, Protestant churches are the country's most rapidly growing religious community.

There are approximately 4,000 foreign missionaries working in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion on the condition that the practice of a religion does not violate public morality, decency, and the public order, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The Directorate of Justice and Religion (DJR) in the Ministry of Interior and Justice is the government office responsible for maintaining a registry of religious groups, disbursing funds to the Roman Catholic Church, facilitating the travel of missionaries and religious officials, and promoting awareness and understanding among the various religious communities. Each local church must register with the DJR in order to hold legal status as a religious organization and to own property. The requirements for registration are largely administrative. However, some groups have complained that the process of registration is slow and inefficient.

In 1964 the Government and the Holy See signed a concordat that underscores the country's historical ties to the Roman Catholic Church and provides government subsidies to the Church, including to its social programs and schools. Other religious groups do not receive such subsidies.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. However, the Catholic Church receives subsidies not granted to other churches, and there are some restrictions on the legal rights of religious groups.

The Government annually provides over \$1.5 million (approximately 1.1 billion bolivars) in subsidies to the Catholic Church's schools and social programs. Other religious groups are free to establish and run their own schools, which do not receive subsidies from the Government.

The Catholic Church has expressed concern that a new program for government-provided itinerant school supervisors could, in theory, become involved in the operation of private religious schools, under the provisions of an October 2000 decree by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports. However, as of the end of the period covered by this report, this decree has had no impact on the operation of private religious schools.

In May 2001, representatives of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant Churches rejected participation in the newly created "Interreligious Parliament of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" (PIV), a government-organized group of numerous religious organizations whose stated purpose is to coordinate their social programs. In a statement released on May 10, Catholic Church representatives expressed concerns for the Church's autonomy and claimed that the PIV appeared to be an effort to centralize unduly the social work of various churches and religions.

On November 21, 2000, as part of a broader ruling on whether certain entities qualify as members of the Government's definition of civil society, the Supreme Court ruled that religious organizations are not part of civil society, and that as such they may not represent Venezuelan citizens in court nor bring their own legal

actions. The Catholic Church expressed concern over this ruling; however, as of the end of the period covered by this report, this ruling had had no impact in practice on Church activities.

Foreign missionaries require a special visa to enter the country, which is obtained through the DJR. Missionaries generally are not refused entry, but many complain that the DJR often takes months or years to process a request due to general bureaucratic inefficiency.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

On several occasions, the Roman Catholic Church has been monitored or threatened by state agents for political reasons; however, there were no such cases reported during the period covered by this report.

The radio station operated by the diocese of Coro had no further problems with the authorities during the period covered by this report. In 1999 two military intelligence agents allegedly warned that they would be monitoring and recording future broadcasts following the broadcast of statements made by the Bishop of Coro against the new Constitution.

There was no reported progress in the official investigation into the April 2000 videotaping by State Security Police (DISIP) agents of a Mass said by Monsignor Baltazar Porras, the president of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference of Venezuela (CEV). Monsignor Porras previously had criticized the Government publicly on a number of issues, including a lack of electoral transparency, supraconstitutional activities of the National Legislative Commission, and the Government's rejection of some international aid during devastating floods at the end of 1999. Following the videotaping incident, the Director of DISIP immediately apologized and the agent was suspended. Bishops also had reported receiving telephone threats during the CEV's assembly at that time.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable.

There are numerous ecumenical groups throughout the country.

The Catholic Church is a vocal participant in the national political debate.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy maintains close contacts with the various religious communities and meets periodically with the DJR. The Ambassador meets regularly with religious authorities, and the Embassy facilitates communication between U.S. religious groups and the Government.

A P P E N D I X E S

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore, The General Assembly, proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.

2. No one shall be held guilty without any limitation due to race, of any penal offence on account of nationality or religion, have the any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor be denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

1. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration insuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

*Hundred and eighty-third plenary meeting
Resolution 217(A)(III) of the United Nations General Assembly,
December 10, 1948*

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APPENDIX B

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

and

THE DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Preamble

The States Parties to the present Covenant,¹

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Recognizing that these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person,

Recognizing that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights, as well as his economic, social and cultural rights,

Considering the obligation of States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms,

Realizing that the individual, having duties to other individuals and to the community to which he belongs, is under a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized in the present Covenant,

Agree upon the following articles:

PART I

Article 1

1. All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

2. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

¹ Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966.

Entry into force 23 March 1976, in accordance with Article 49

3. The States Parties to the present Covenant, including those having responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

PART II

Article 2

1. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

2. Where not already provided for by existing legislative or other measures, each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take the necessary steps, in accordance with its constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Covenant, to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the present Covenant.

3. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes:

(a) To ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;

(b) To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy;

(c) To ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce such remedies when granted.

Article 3

The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant.

Article 4

1. In time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, the States Parties to the present Covenant may take measures derogating from their obligations under the present Covenant to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin.

2. No derogation from articles 6, 7, 8 (paragraphs I and 2), 11, 15, 16 and 18 may be made under this provision.

3. Any State Party to the present Covenant availing itself of the right of derogation shall immediately inform the other States Parties to the present Covenant, through the intermediary of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, of the provisions from which it has derogated and of the reasons by which it was actuated. A further communication shall be made, through the same intermediary, on the date on which it terminates such derogation.

Article 5

1. Nothing in the present Covenant may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms recognized herein or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the present Covenant.

2. There shall be no restriction upon or derogation from any of the fundamental human rights recognized or existing in any State Party to the present Covenant pursuant to law, conventions, regulations or custom on the pretext that the present Covenant does not recognize such rights or that it recognizes them to a lesser extent.

PART III**Article 6**

1. Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.

2. In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime and not contrary to the provisions of the present Covenant and to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court.

3. When deprivation of life constitutes the crime of genocide, it is understood that nothing in this article shall authorize any State Party to the present Covenant to derogate in any way from any obligation assumed under the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

4. Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence. Amnesty, pardon or commutation of the sentence of death may be granted in all cases.

5. Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age and shall not be carried out on pregnant women.

6. Nothing in this article shall be invoked to delay or to prevent the abolition of capital punishment by any State Party to the present Covenant.

Article 7

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.

Article 8

1. No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited.

2. No one shall be held in servitude.

3. (a) No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour;

(b) Paragraph 3 (a) shall not be held to preclude, in countries where imprisonment with hard labour may be imposed as a punishment for a crime, the performance of hard labour in pursuance of a sentence to such punishment by a competent court;

(c) For the purpose of this paragraph the term "forced or compulsory labour" shall not include:

(i) Any work or service, not referred to in subparagraph (b), normally required of a person who is under detention in consequence of a lawful order of a court, or of a person during conditional release from such detention;

(ii) Any service of a military character and, in countries where conscientious objection is recognized, any national service required by law of conscientious objectors;

(iii) Any service exacted in cases of emergency or calamity threatening the life or well-being of the community;

(iv) Any work or service which forms part of normal civil obligations.

Article 9

1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.

2. Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him.

3. Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release. It shall not be the general rule that persons awaiting trial shall be detained in custody, but release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial, at any other stage of the judicial proceedings, and, should occasion arise, for execution of the judgement.

4. Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful.

5. Anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation.

Article 10

1. All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

2. (a) Accused persons shall, save in exceptional circumstances, be segregated from convicted persons and shall be subject to separate treatment appropriate to their status as unconvicted persons;

(b) Accused juvenile persons shall be separated from adults and brought as speedily as possible for adjudication. 3. The penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation. Juvenile offenders shall be segregated from adults and be accorded treatment appropriate to their age and legal status.

Article 11

No one shall be imprisoned merely on the ground of inability to fulfil a contractual obligation.

Article 12

1. Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.

2. Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.

3. The above-mentioned rights shall not be subject to any restrictions except those which are provided by law, are necessary to protect national security, public order (ordre public), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others, and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Covenant.

4. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country.

Article 13

An alien lawfully in the territory of a State Party to the present Covenant may be expelled therefrom only in pursuance of a decision reached in accordance with law and shall, except where compelling reasons of national security otherwise require, be allowed to submit the reasons against his expulsion and to have his case reviewed by, and be represented for the purpose before, the competent authority or a person or persons especially designated by the competent authority.

Article 14

1. All persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, or of his rights and obligations in a suit at law, everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. The press and the public may be excluded from all or part of a trial for reasons of morals, public order (ordre public) or national security in a democratic society, or when the interest of the private lives of the parties so requires, or to the extent strictly necessary in the opinion of the court in special circumstances where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice; but any judgement rendered in a criminal case or in a suit at law shall be made public except where the interest of juvenile persons otherwise requires or the proceedings concern matrimonial disputes or the guardianship of children.

2. Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.

3. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, everyone shall be entitled to the following minimum guarantees, in full equality:

(a) To be informed promptly and in detail in a language which he understands of the nature and cause of the charge against him;

(b) To have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing;

(c) To be tried without undue delay;

(d) To be tried in his presence, and to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing; to be informed, if he does not have legal assistance, of this right; and to have legal assistance assigned to him, in any case where the interests of justice so require, and without payment by him in any such case if he does not have sufficient means to pay for it;

(e) To examine, or have examined, the witnesses against him and to obtain the attendance and examination of witnesses on his behalf under the same conditions as witnesses against him;

(f) To have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court;

(g) Not to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt.

4. In the case of juvenile persons, the procedure shall be such as will take account of their age and the desirability of promoting their rehabilitation.

5. Everyone convicted of a crime shall have the right to his conviction and sentence being reviewed by a higher tribunal according to law.

6. When a person has by a final decision been convicted of a criminal offence and when subsequently his conviction has been reversed or he has been pardoned on the ground that a new or newly discovered fact shows conclusively that there has been a miscarriage of justice, the person who has suffered punishment as a result of such conviction shall be compensated according to law, unless it is proved that the non-disclosure of the unknown fact in time is wholly or partly attributable to him.

7. No one shall be liable to be tried or punished again for an offence for which he has already been finally convicted or acquitted in accordance with the law and penal procedure of each country.

Article 15

1. No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time when the criminal offence was committed. If, subsequent to the commission of the offence, provision is made by law for the imposition of the lighter penalty, the offender shall benefit thereby.

2. Nothing in this article shall prejudice the trial and punishment of any person for any act or omission which, at the time when it was committed, was criminal according to the general principles of law recognized by the community of nations.

Article 16

Everyone shall have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 17

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 18

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. 4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Article 19

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
- (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

Article 20

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.
2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

Article 21

The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 22

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on members of the armed forces and of the police in their exercise of this right.
3. Nothing in this article shall authorize States Parties to the International Labour Organization Convention of 1948 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize to take legislative measures which would prejudice, or to apply the law in such a manner as to prejudice, the guarantees provided for in that Convention.

Article 23

1. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.
2. The right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized.
3. No marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
4. States Parties to the present Covenant shall take appropriate steps to ensure equality of rights and responsibilities of spouses as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. In the case of dissolution, provision shall be made for the necessary protection of any children.

Article 24

1. Every child shall have, without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.
2. Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name.
3. Every child has the right to acquire a nationality.

Article 25

- Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:
- (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
 - (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
 - (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

Article 26

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 27

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

PART IV**Article 28**

1. There shall be established a Human Rights Committee (hereafter referred to in the present Covenant as the Committee). It shall consist of eighteen members and shall carry out the functions hereinafter provided.

2. The Committee shall be composed of nationals of the States Parties to the present Covenant who shall be persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights, consideration being given to the usefulness of the participation of some persons having legal experience.

3. The members of the Committee shall be elected and shall serve in their personal capacity.

Article 29

1. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons possessing the qualifications prescribed in article 28 and nominated for the purpose by the States Parties to the present Covenant.

2. Each State Party to the present Covenant may nominate not more than two persons. These persons shall be nationals of the nominating State.

3. A person shall be eligible for renomination.

Article 30

1. The initial election shall be held no later than six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Covenant.

2. At least four months before the date of each election to the Committee, other than an election to fill a vacancy declared in accordance with article 34, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a written invitation to the States Parties to the present Covenant to submit their nominations for membership of the Committee within three months.

3. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of all the persons thus nominated, with an indication of the States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties to the present Covenant no later than one month before the date of each election.

4. Elections of the members of the Committee shall be held at a meeting of the States Parties to the present Covenant convened by the Secretary General of the United Nations at the Headquarters of the United Nations. At that meeting, for which two thirds of the States Parties to the present Covenant shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those nominees who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.

Article 31

1. The Committee may not include more than one national of the same State.

2. In the election of the Committee, consideration shall be given to equitable geographical distribution of membership and to the representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems.

Article 32

1. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. They shall be eligible for re-election if renominated. However, the terms of nine of the

members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election, the names of these nine members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the meeting referred to in article 30, paragraph 4.

2. Elections at the expiry of office shall be held in accordance with the preceding articles of this part of the present Covenant.

Article 33

1. If, in the unanimous opinion of the other members, a member of the Committee has ceased to carry out his functions for any cause other than absence of a temporary character, the Chairman of the Committee shall notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then declare the seat of that member to be vacant.

2. In the event of the death or the resignation of a member of the Committee, the Chairman shall immediately notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall declare the seat vacant from the date of death or the date on which the resignation takes effect.

Article 34

1. When a vacancy is declared in accordance with article 33 and if the term of office of the member to be replaced does not expire within six months of the declaration of the vacancy, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify each of the States Parties to the present Covenant, which may within two months submit nominations in accordance with article 29 for the purpose of filling the vacancy.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of the persons thus nominated and shall submit it to the States Parties to the present Covenant. The election to fill the vacancy shall then take place in accordance with the relevant provisions of this part of the present Covenant.

3. A member of the Committee elected to fill a vacancy declared in accordance with article 33 shall hold office for the remainder of the term of the member who vacated the seat on the Committee under the provisions of that article.

Article 35

The members of the Committee shall, with the approval of the General Assembly of the United Nations, receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the General Assembly may decide, having regard to the importance of the Committee's responsibilities.

Article 36

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Covenant.

Article 37

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall convene the initial meeting of the Committee at the Headquarters of the United Nations.

2. After its initial meeting, the Committee shall meet at such times as shall be provided in its rules of procedure.

3. The Committee shall normally meet at the Headquarters of the United Nations or at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Article 38

Every member of the Committee shall, before taking up his duties, make a solemn declaration in open committee that he will perform his functions impartially and conscientiously.

Article 39

1. The Committee shall elect its officers for a term of two years. They may be re-elected.

2. The Committee shall establish its own rules of procedure, but these rules shall provide, inter alia, that:

(a) Twelve members shall constitute a quorum;

(b) Decisions of the Committee shall be made by a majority vote of the members present.

Article 40

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to submit reports on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized herein and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights:

(a) Within one year of the entry into force of the present Covenant for the States Parties concerned;

(b) Thereafter whenever the Committee so requests.

2. All reports shall be submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall transmit them to the Committee for consideration. Reports shall indicate the factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the implementation of the present Covenant.

3. The Secretary-General of the United Nations may, after consultation with the Committee, transmit to the specialized agencies concerned copies of such parts of the reports as may fall within their field of competence.

4. The Committee shall study the reports submitted by the States Parties to the present Covenant. It shall transmit its reports, and such general comments as it may consider appropriate, to the States Parties. The Committee may also transmit to the Economic and Social Council these comments along with the copies of the reports it has received from States Parties to the present Covenant.

5. The States Parties to the present Covenant may submit to the Committee observations on any comments that may be made in accordance with paragraph 4 of this article.

Article 41

1. A State Party to the present Covenant may at any time declare under this article that it recognizes the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications to the effect that a State Party claims that another State Party is not fulfilling its obligations under the present Covenant. Communications under this article may be received and considered only if submitted by a State Party which has made a declaration recognizing in regard to itself the competence of the Committee. No communication shall be received by the Committee if it concerns a State Party which has not made such a declaration. Communications received under this article shall be dealt with in accordance with the following procedure:

(a) If a State Party to the present Covenant considers that another State Party is not giving effect to the provisions of the present Covenant, it may, by written communication, bring the matter to the attention of that State Party. Within three months after the receipt of the communication the receiving State shall afford the State which sent the communication an explanation, or any other statement in writing clarifying the matter which should include, to the extent possible and pertinent, reference to domestic procedures and remedies taken, pending, or available in the matter;

(b) If the matter is not adjusted to the satisfaction of both States Parties concerned within six months after the receipt by the receiving State of the initial communication, either State shall have the right to refer the matter to the Committee, by notice given to the Committee and to the other State;

(c) The Committee shall deal with a matter referred to it only after it has ascertained that all available domestic remedies have been invoked and exhausted in the matter, in conformity with the generally recognized principles of international law. This shall not be the rule where the application of the remedies is unreasonably prolonged;

(d) The Committee shall hold closed meetings when examining communications under this article;

(e) Subject to the provisions of subparagraph (c), the Committee shall make available its good offices to the States Parties concerned with a view to a friendly solution of the matter on the basis of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the present Covenant;

(f) In any matter referred to it, the Committee may call upon the States Parties concerned, referred to in subparagraph (b), to supply any relevant information;

(g) The States Parties concerned, referred to in subparagraph (b), shall have the right to be represented when the matter is being considered in the Committee and to make submissions orally and/or in writing;

(h) The Committee shall, within twelve months after the date of receipt of notice under subparagraph (b), submit a report:

(i) If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (e) is reached, the Committee shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts and of the solution reached;

(ii) If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (e) is not reached, the Committee shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts; the written submissions and record of the oral submissions made by the States Parties concerned shall be attached to the report. In every matter, the report shall be communicated to the States Parties concerned.

2. The provisions of this article shall come into force when ten States Parties to the present Covenant have made declarations under paragraph 1 of this article. Such declarations shall be deposited by the States Parties with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall transmit copies thereof to the other States Parties. A declaration may be withdrawn at any time by notification to the Secretary-General. Such a withdrawal shall not prejudice the consideration of any matter which is the subject of a communication already transmitted under this article; no further communication by any State Party shall be received after the notification of withdrawal of the declaration has been received by the Secretary-General, unless the State Party concerned has made a new declaration.

Article 42

1. (a) If a matter referred to the Committee in accordance with article 41 is not resolved to the satisfaction of the States Parties concerned, the Committee may, with the prior consent of the States Parties concerned, appoint an ad hoc Conciliation Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission). The good offices of the Commission shall be made available to the States Parties concerned with a view to an amicable solution of the matter on the basis of respect for the present Covenant;

(b) The Commission shall consist of five persons acceptable to the States Parties concerned. If the States Parties concerned fail to reach agreement within three months on all or part of the composition of the Commission, the members of the Commission concerning whom no agreement has been reached shall be elected by secret ballot by a two-thirds majority vote of the Committee from among its members.

2. The members of the Commission shall serve in their personal capacity. They shall not be nationals of the States Parties concerned, or of a State not Party to the present Covenant, or of a State Party which has not made a declaration under article 41.

3. The Commission shall elect its own Chairman and adopt its own rules of procedure.

4. The meetings of the Commission shall normally be held at the Headquarters of the United Nations or at the United Nations Office at Geneva. However, they may be held at such other convenient places as the Commission may determine in consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the States Parties concerned.

5. The secretariat provided in accordance with article 36 shall also service the commissions appointed under this article.

6. The information received and collated by the Committee shall be made available to the Commission and the Commission may call upon the States Parties concerned to supply any other relevant information. 7. When the Commission has fully considered the matter, but in any event not later than twelve months after having been seized of the matter, it shall submit to the Chairman of the Committee a report for communication to the States Parties concerned:

(a) If the Commission is unable to complete its consideration of the matter within twelve months, it shall confine its report to a brief statement of the status of its consideration of the matter;

(b) If an amicable solution to the matter on the basis of respect for human rights as recognized in the present Covenant is reached, the Commission shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts and of the solution reached;

(c) If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (b) is not reached, the Commission's report shall embody its findings on all questions of fact relevant to the issues between the States Parties concerned, and its views on the possibilities of an amicable solution of the matter. This report shall also contain the written submissions and a record of the oral submissions made by the States Parties concerned;

(d) If the Commission's report is submitted under subparagraph (c), the States Parties concerned shall, within three months of the receipt of the report, notify the Chairman of the Committee whether or not they accept the contents of the report of the Commission.

8. The provisions of this article are without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Committee under article 41.

9. The States Parties concerned shall share equally all the expenses of the members of the Commission in accordance with estimates to be provided by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

10. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall be empowered to pay the expenses of the members of the Commission, if necessary, before reimbursement by the States Parties concerned, in accordance with paragraph 9 of this article.

Article 43

The members of the Committee, and of the ad hoc conciliation commissions which may be appointed under article 42, shall be entitled to the facilities, privileges and immunities of experts on mission for the United Nations as laid down in the relevant sections of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

Article 44

The provisions for the implementation of the present Covenant shall apply without prejudice to the procedures prescribed in the field of human rights by or under the constituent instruments and the conventions of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies and shall not prevent the States Parties to the present Covenant from having recourse to other procedures for settling a dispute in accordance with general or special international agreements in force between them.

Article 45

The Committee shall submit to the General Assembly of the United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council, an annual report on its activities.

PART V

Article 46

Nothing in the present Covenant shall be interpreted as impairing the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of the constitutions of the specialized agencies which define the respective responsibilities of the various organs of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies in regard to the matters dealt with in the present Covenant.

Article 47

Nothing in the present Covenant shall be interpreted as impairing the inherent right of all peoples to enjoy and utilize fully and freely their natural wealth and resources.

PART VI

Article 48

1. The present Covenant is open for signature by any State Member of the United Nations or member of any of its specialized agencies, by any State Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, and by any other State which has been invited by the General Assembly of the United Nations to become a Party to the present Covenant.

2. The present Covenant is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

3. The present Covenant shall be open to accession by any State referred to in paragraph 1 of this article.

4. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

5. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall inform all States which have signed this Covenant or acceded to it of the deposit of each instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 49

1. The present Covenant shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the thirty-fifth instrument of ratification or instrument of accession.

2. For each State ratifying the present Covenant or acceding to it after the deposit of the thirty-fifth instrument of ratification or instrument of accession, the present Covenant shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or instrument of accession.

Article 50

The provisions of the present Covenant shall extend to all parts of federal States without any limitations or exceptions.

Article 51

1. Any State Party to the present Covenant may propose an amendment and file it with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall thereupon communicate any proposed amendments to the States Parties to the present Covenant with a request that they notify him whether they favour a conference of States Parties for the purpose of considering and voting upon the proposals. In the event that at least one third of the States Parties favours such a conference, the Secretary-General shall convene the conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Any amendment adopted by a majority of the States Parties present and voting at the conference shall be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for approval.

2. Amendments shall come into force when they have been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations and accepted by a two-thirds majority of the States Parties to the present Covenant in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. 3. When amendments come into force, they shall be binding on those States Parties which have accepted them, other States Parties still being bound by the provisions of the present Covenant and any earlier amendment which they have accepted.

Article 52

Irrespective of the notifications made under article 48, paragraph 5, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall inform all States referred to in paragraph I of the same article of the following particulars:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions under article 48;
- (b) The date of the entry into force of the present Covenant under article 49 and the date of the entry into force of any amendments under article 51.

Article 53

1. The present Covenant, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit certified copies of the present Covenant to all States referred to in article 48.

DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

The General Assembly,¹

Considering that one of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations is that of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, and that all Member States have pledged themselves to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organization to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

Considering that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights proclaim the principles of nondiscrimination and equality before the law and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief,

Considering that the disregard and infringement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or whatever belief, have brought, directly or indirectly, wars and great suf-

¹Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981

fering to mankind, especially where they serve as a means of foreign interference in the internal affairs of other States and amount to kindling hatred between peoples and nations,

Considering that religion or belief, for anyone who professes either, is one of the fundamental elements in his conception of life and that freedom of religion or belief should be fully respected and guaranteed,

Considering that it is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief and to ensure that the use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, other relevant instruments of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the present Declaration is inadmissible,

Convinced that freedom of religion and belief should also contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism and racial discrimination,

Noting with satisfaction the adoption of several, and the coming into force of some, conventions, under the aegis of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies, for the elimination of various forms of discrimination,

Concerned by manifestations of intolerance and by the existence of discrimination in matters of religion or belief still in evidence in some areas of the world,

Resolved to adopt all necessary measures for the speedy elimination of such intolerance in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat discrimination on the ground of religion or belief,

Proclaims this Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief:

Article 1

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 2

1. No one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on the grounds of religion or other belief.

2. For the purposes of the present Declaration, the expression "intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief" means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.

Article 3

Discrimination between human being on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enunciated in detail in the International Covenants on Human Rights, and as an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations.

Article 4

1. All States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life.

2. All States shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or other beliefs in this matter.

Article 5

1. The parents or, as the case may be, the legal guardians of the child have the right to organize the life within the family in accordance with their religion or belief

and bearing in mind the moral education in which they believe the child should be brought up.

2. Every child shall enjoy the right to have access to education in the matter of religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of his parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, and shall not be compelled to receive teaching on religion or belief against the wishes of his parents or legal guardians, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.

3. The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the ground of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion or belief of others, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.

4. In the case of a child who is not under the care either of his parents or of legal guardians, due account shall be taken of their expressed wishes or of any other proof of their wishes in the matter of religion or belief, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle. 5. Practices of a religion or belief in which a child is brought up must not be injurious to his physical or mental health or to his full development, taking into account article 1, paragraph 3, of the present Declaration.

Article 6

In accordance with article I of the present Declaration, and subject to the provisions of article 1, paragraph 3, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include, *inter alia*, the following freedoms:

- (a) To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;
- (b) To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;
- (c) To make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;
- (d) To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas;
- (e) To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes;
- (f) To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions;
- (g) To train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirements and standards of any religion or belief;
- (h) To observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one's religion or belief;
- (i) To establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion and belief at the national and international levels.

Article 7

The rights and freedoms set forth in the present Declaration shall be accorded in national legislation in such a manner that everyone shall be able to avail himself of such rights and freedoms in practice.

Article 8

Nothing in the present Declaration shall be construed as restricting or derogating from any right defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights.

APPENDIX C

TRAINING AT THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT

I. Summary of Major Developments

Since the first report on International Religious Freedom was issued in September 1999, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has worked continuously with the Office of International Religious Freedom (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor) in implementing H.R. 2431. The result of this cooperation has been the further integration of religious freedom issues into the regular curriculum at FSI. During the period covered by this report, members of the FSI training staff took part in numerous conferences dealing with religious freedom, persecution, conflict, and reconciliation hosted by academic institutions, think tanks and nongovernmental organizations. In addition the Director of FSI's Political Training Division has continued to work with the staff of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to ensure that its insights are reflected in FSI's course offerings. In all these ways, the staff at FSI has sought to bolster their own skills on religious freedom issues.

II. Courses Offered

The School of Professional and Area Studies (SPAS) at FSI offers training relevant to the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) in a variety of courses. Following are brief descriptions of courses offered by the divisions of Political Training, Orientation, Consular Training, and Area Studies:

FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER ORIENTATION (A-100)

Every new Foreign Service Officer takes a 7-week orientation course to prepare for an initial assignment overseas and to obtain the grounding needed for a successful foreign service career. For a wide range of emerging policy issues the students are divided into study groups to engage in research on the topics and then make hour-long presentations to classmates, which includes question and answer sessions. The Political Training Division briefs the students who are selected to work on religious freedom issues, identifies initial contacts for them to make, and provides them with the research materials described in Section III below. These students routinely visit the Office of International Religious Freedom and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to discuss the work of these entities and the issue of religious freedom as an element of U.S. foreign policy. The Political Training staff monitors the work of each religious freedom group to ensure that key points related to IRFA are covered appropriately.

POLITICAL TRADECRAFT (PP-202) AND POLITICAL ECONOMIC TRADECRAFT (PG-140)

Each of these two basic 3-week-long courses is offered three times per year. The students are full time government employees (mostly State Department Foreign Service officers) being assigned for the first time to work in an embassy's or consulate's political, economic, or combined political/economic section overseas. These are essentially required courses, in that State Department officers are assigned to take these courses by the personnel system and exceptions are rare. The State Department expects that a large proportion of these officers/students during their careers will be directly responsible for preparing their post's human rights and religious freedom reports. Therefore, these two courses provide training to one of the major classes of officers identified in the IRFA.

In these courses, each student is provided with a course notebook that contains the items listed in Section III. In addition the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provides at least one half-day session during which religious freedom issues are featured prominently. There is also usually a segment that includes a discussion of religious persecution, religious identity, and religious reconciliation as important factors in contemporary international conflicts. Religious freedom issues also are covered in a major segment of the course related to doing contact work overseas.

GLOBAL ISSUES (PP-510)

This 3-day course is given twice a year and is geared toward mid-level foreign affairs and national security professionals working for the Department of State and other agencies. In the fall, this course is combined with a separate module on human rights.

In these courses students are provided with a course notebook that contains the items listed in Section III. As in the Tradecraft courses, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provides a full-day session during which religious freedom issues are prominently featured in a discussion led by the Office of International Religious Freedom, together with other aspects of U.S. human rights policy. The importance of religious issues in the modern world also is raised in several of the other segments, including one devoted to U.S. foreign policy priorities and strategic planning. In cooperation with the Area Studies Training Division, the most recent session of the course included a major segment on "political Islam."

INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT WORKSHOP (PP-519)

This weeklong workshop focuses on various aspects of international conflict, especially the enhancement of skills needed to analyze the causes of conflict and develop a plan for preventive diplomacy. This course trains up to 30 foreign affairs and national security professionals at all levels working for the Department of State and other agencies.

The students are provided with reading materials including most of the key documents listed in Section III. Multiple segments in this course deal with religious persecution and identity as a factor in ethnic conflict, and reconciliation as a potential preventive step.

BASIC CONSULAR COURSE (PC-530)

This course serves as the prerequisite for obtaining a consular commission. It is aimed at junior foreign service officers preparing to go overseas to fill consular positions, dependents of U. S. government employees who will work as consular associates overseas, and domestic employees of the Bureau of Consular Affairs who may serve temporary duty as consular officers should the need arise.

The course schedule includes a lecture related to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), "Working with the INS," that incorporates discussion of refugee and asylum issues as these pertain to consular officers. The subject also is covered in further detail in the Self-Instructional Guide (SIG) on immigrant visa processing, which includes a chapter on "Refugees, Asylum, Walk-ins, and Parole." This chapter describes the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee criteria, the U.S. refugee program, and processing requirements for refugees. Scenarios involving religious minorities have been incorporated into the "role play" portion of the training on consular prison visits.

ADVANCED CONSULAR COURSE (PC-532)

The Advanced Consular Course is a 3-week course aimed at mid-level consular officers being assigned to overseas posts as first-time managers, as well as Civil Service employees of the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

This course continues routinely to include a session, organized by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), on refugee processing and policy and religious persecution; and a second session, organized by representatives of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor's Office of Country Reports and Asylum Affairs (DRL/CRA) on U.S. asylum law and processing. Emphasis is given to the role of a consular officer in these areas, including processing of refugee and asylee cases (based on approved I-730 petitions).

AREA STUDIES

The Foreign Service Institute and the Appeal of Conscience Foundation annually sponsor a major symposium focused on religious freedom and the role of U.S. dip-

lomats overseas. Following keynote addresses, officers at FSI in language training and area studies courses take part in day-long sessions with outside experts on religious issues in their region, to permit in depth exchanges and discussions.

Throughout the year, the course chairs in the Area Studies Division, in cooperation with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, take steps to ensure that their courses address both regional and country specific issues of religion, religious freedom and human rights. Participants receive substantial information encompassing the full range of issues affecting particular regions, including religious freedom and human rights, religious history and religious traditions. Students also receive reading lists (and World Wide Web guidance) that direct them to even more detailed material.

AMBASSADORIAL AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION TRAINING

In these courses, students are provided with a course notebook that contains the items listed in Section III. When possible the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs and/or the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provide oral briefings on religious freedom and related human rights issues to these senior officials.

III. Background Material on Religious Freedom

The following background materials related to religious freedom are made available to FSI students:

- Mission Statement for the State Department Office of International Religious Freedom
- “Preparing the Annual report on Religious Freedom for 2001”—State Department Telegram April 13, 2001 (MRN 66404)
- 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom (Executive Summary)
- Main Web Page of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
- List of Members (current and former) of the for the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
- Report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (Executive Summary) May 1, 2001

Highlights from Key International Documents:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 18)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 18, 26 & 27)

APPENDIX D

INS AND THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT, AUGUST 2001

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is committed to ensuring that all claims for refugee and asylum protection are treated with fairness, respect, and dignity. Shortly after passage of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), the INS began to assess existing asylum and refugee training programs in order to address the specific training topics required with the IRFA. The INS has formed a working group to coordinate compliance under the law, including training, development of guidelines relating to potential hostile biases, and enforcement of the new inadmissibility provision relating to foreign government officials who have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom. This appendix summarizes the agency's actions during FY2001, as required under Section 102 (b)(1)(E) of the IRFA.

I. Section 602 (a): Training of Refugee Adjudicators

Section 602(a)(1) of the IRFA amends section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act by requiring that the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of State, provide "all United States officials adjudicating refugee cases under this section with the same training as that provided to officers adjudicating asylum cases under section 208." This training must include "country-specific conditions, instruction on the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion, instruction on methods of religious persecution practiced in foreign countries, and applicable distinctions within a country between the nature of and treatment of various religious practices and believers."

Prior to the IRFA, no specific statute or regulation governed the training of officers adjudicating refugee cases in the overseas refugee program. Refugee adjudications have traditionally been done by Immigration Officers stationed overseas who receive, in addition to basic immigration law training, specialized training consisting of a survey of refugee law and procedure, as well as in-country training. In recent years the majority of officers detailed for specific short-term refugee processing work have been Asylum Officers, who receive approximately 5 weeks of specialized training related to international human rights law, nonadversarial interview techniques, and other relevant national and international refugee laws and principles.¹

To comply with IRFA training requirements prior to FY2001, non-Asylum Officers adjudicating overseas refugee cases attended portions of the 5-week Asylum Officer Basic Training Course (AOBTC). In FY2001, the Office of International Affairs, Refugee Branch, developed a specialized 2-week training in refugee law and overseas refugee procedure. This course focused specifically on the United States Refugee Program and consisted of concentrated presentations of refugee law materials adapted from the Asylum Officer Basic Training Course (AOBTC) curriculum, as well as overseas refugee procedure materials developed specifically for the training. The curriculum mirrored those portions of the AOBTC that are applicable to adjudication of overseas refugee cases. Twenty-four overseas officers attended the training. All persons who adjudicate refugee requests will continue to receive country conditions training and materials provided primarily by the INS Resource Information Center (RIC) in the Office of International Affairs, as well as copies of the De-

¹ Asylum Officers complete an initial 5-week Immigration Officer Basic Training Course, and 5 additional weeks of the Asylum Officer Basic Training Course (AOBTC). The AOBTC, held approximately twice per year, includes international human rights law, asylum and refugee law, interviewing techniques, decision-making and decision-writing skills, effective country conditions research skills, and computer skills. Compulsory in-service training for all asylum officers is held weekly.

partment of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom mandated by Section 102 of the IRFA.

II. Section 603 (b): Training of Asylum Officers Adjudicating Asylum Cases, and Immigration Officers Performing Duties under section 235 (b) of the INA (Expedited Removal).

ASYLUM

Asylum Officers have received focused training on claims involving religious issues since the Asylum Division's inception in 1991, and this was augmented in FY2001 both with basic asylum training and continuing training in the field offices. Two AOBTC classes were conducted during FY2001 in which a total of 52 new Asylum Officers were trained. The course also included a specific lesson devoted to the IRFA and, throughout the course, additional emphasis was placed on religious persecution issues.

Local Asylum Office trainers continue to follow a policy of including a discussion of religious persecution whenever relevant during training on country conditions. In addition, all offices in FY2001 had training specifically on religious persecution, and many of these sessions were presented by outside experts. During FY2001 the Asylum Division continued to promote online research and train officers both in the field offices and at the AOBTC, and examples of religious groups and religious persecution in different countries were used as exercises to conduct online research.

The RIC has published an online guide to web research on the INS Intranet, and an area was created for and devoted to government and nongovernment links to religious persecution websites. The RIC serves both the Asylum Division and the Refugee Branch and is responsible for the collection and/or production and distribution of materials regarding human rights conditions around the world. The RIC separately catalogs religious freedom periodicals and separately codes RIC responses to field queries that involve religious issues. A list of documents focused specifically on religious persecution and distributed to the asylum field offices is attached. There are also numerous reports distributed by the RIC that are country or region-specific and do not focus on religion but which contain some information on religious persecution in the particular country or region.

EXPEDITED REMOVAL/CREDIBLE FEAR

Approximately 4,500 Immigration Inspectors and 2,500 Detention and Deportation Officers may at some time be involved in the expedited removal/credible fear process and therefore are subject to the training provisions of Section 603(b). A training video is currently in production. The video will be used to ensure that all officers who may be involved in the expedited removal/credible fear process under INA Section 235 (b) understand the need for sensitivity to persecution claims.

Section 602 (c): Guidelines for Addressing Hostile Biases: Employees Hired Abroad

Preliminary guidelines have been drafted for the hiring of personnel abroad who work in refugee-related situations, and revisions to these drafts are under discussion within the INS working group. The INS and the Department of State (DOS) are discussing ways in which IRFA obligations can be included in the standard DOS contract entered into with non-governmental agencies involved in refugee processing. DOS anticipates developing the guidelines more fully through consultation with overseas personnel officers and the relevant DOS components in the course of the following fiscal year.

Section 603 (a): Guidelines for Addressing Hostile Biases: Interpreters

Guidelines for interpreters of conversations between aliens and Immigration Inspectors/Asylum Officers are to be developed jointly by DOS and the Department of Justice. In the asylum field offices, applicants for asylum currently provide their own interpreters. In the expedited removal/credible fear process, the INS provides interpreters through the use of contracted services. Officers at ports-of-entry currently employ various means of interpretation. The ports may use an Immigration Officer or the INS Interpreters' Unit in New York, if available, or they may use one of several commercial services, if funding permits. All ports-of-entry employees have been notified of the provisions of the IRFA relating to use of interpreters with hostile biases, and have been advised to avoid the use of airline employees as interpreters, whenever possible, for secondary inspection.

Language Services Associates (LSA) is the only interpreter service currently used by Asylum Officers in the Asylum Pre-Screening program. The contract between LSA and the INS has special provisions to ensure the security and confidentiality of the credible fear process, and efforts are underway to include specific antibiotics provisions in future interpreter contracts. A list of language service providers developed by the Asylum Division can now be used by any INS division needing language translation and interpreter services.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION ARTICLES DISTRIBUTED BY THE INS RESOURCE INFORMATION CENTER

Below is a comprehensive, chronological list of the specialized documents on religious practices and abuses of religious freedom distributed by the INS Resource Information Center (RIC) to the Asylum Division since 1992. They were distributed at the time they came to the attention of the RIC, which, in some cases, was one or more years after the date of publication. This list does not include articles the RIC makes available to asylum field offices in the biweekly News Summary for Asylum Adjudicators.

- Immigration and Refugee Board Documentation Centre. *Mohajirs: Issue Paper* (Ottawa: IRBDC, September 1990), 24 p.
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APPENDIX E

OVERVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE POLICY

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the world's refugee population to be 12 million persons. Millions more are displaced within their own countries by war, famine, and civil unrest. The United States works with other governments and international and nongovernmental organizations to protect refugees, internally displaced persons, and conflict victims, and strives to ensure that survival needs for food, health care, and shelter are met. The United States has been instrumental in mobilizing a community of nations to work through these organizations to alleviate the misery and suffering of refugees worldwide, supporting in FY 2001, major relief and repatriation programs.

In seeking durable long-term solutions for most refugees, the United States gives priority to the safe, voluntary return of refugees to their homelands. This policy, recognized in the Refugee Act of 1980, is also the preference of the UNHCR and the international community of nations that supports refugees. If safe, voluntary repatriation is not feasible, other durable solutions are sought, including resettlement in countries of asylum within the region and in other regions. Resettlement in other countries, including the United States, is appropriate for refugees in urgent need of protection and for refugees for whom other durable solutions are inappropriate or unavailable.

The United States considers for admission as refugees persons of special humanitarian concern who can establish persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The legal basis of the refugee admissions program is the Refugee Act of 1980, which embodies the American tradition of granting refuge to diverse groups suffering or fearing persecution. The act adopted the definition of "refugee" contained in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Over the past decade, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has been adjusting its focus away from the large refugee admissions programs that had developed during the Cold War for nationals of Communist countries and toward more diverse refugee groups that require protection for a variety of reasons, including religious belief. The following describes the program's efforts, by region, in meeting the needs of refugees worldwide who have faced religious persecution.

Africa

For the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, religious freedom and peaceful coexistence are the rule, even where other conflicts hold sway. The primary exception to the rule is Sudan, where the long ongoing civil war has a religious dimension. Islam is the state religion and Muslims dominate the Government. The Government continues to restrict the activities of Christians, practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and other non-Muslims. Security forces reportedly harass and use violence against persons based on their religious beliefs. In areas controlled by the Government, access to education as well as other social services is far easier for Muslims than for Christians and non-Muslims. The Government has conducted or tolerated attacks on civilians, indiscriminate bombing raids, and slave raids in the south, all with a religious as well as an ethnic dimension.

The U.S. admissions program has in recent years increased its focus in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Kenya on these Sudanese victims of religious discrimination and repression. The refugee-processing program in Cairo was expanded in 1999 with Sudanese refugees as the primary beneficiaries. During FY 2001, some 3,600 young Sudanese refugees who were in camps in Kenya were resettled in the United States. This effort included some 500 unaccompanied minors who entered foster care programs in various states.

Religious freedom is also a growing concern in Nigeria, where northern states have adopted and expanded Islamic law (Shari'a). Many non-Muslims have left the northern states and returned to the south because they fear the application of Shari'a. These internally displaced persons face harassment and loss of opportunities if they remain in the north.

East Asia

Most countries in the region permit freedom of worship. However, the religious freedom situation in China is worsening. The Government actively suppresses those groups that it cannot control directly, most notably the Vatican-affiliated (underground) Catholic Church, Protestant "house churches," some Muslim groups, Tibetan Buddhists, and members of the Falun Gong spiritual movement. The Vietnamese constitution provides for freedom of worship; however, the Government restricts those organized activities of religious organizations that it defines as being at variance with state laws and policies. Most independent religious activities either are prohibited or restricted severely. For example, Buddhist monks are required to work under a party-controlled umbrella organization. The situation for some religious groups in Laos is similar. In Burma, the Government actively suppresses most non-Buddhist religions (particularly for minority ethnic groups such as the Karen and Chin). The religious freedom situation in North Korea is particularly hard to gauge given the extreme lack of access provided by the Government; however, most indications are that religious freedom is circumscribed severely.

The U.S. admissions program for East Asia accepts refugee cases referred by the UNHCR and U.S. embassies. Over the past several years, the Department of State has worked closely with the UNHCR to strengthen the referral process so those individuals in need of resettlement can have access to the program.

Europe

The breakup of the Soviet Union initially led to a resurgence of religious practice throughout the region, but in recent years the fear of newer religious groups, many of them with ties to coreligionists in other countries, has led to a backlash in a number of the newly independent states. Most states regulate religious groups and activities, specifying a set of "traditional" religions with certain privileges denied to other groups. In some countries, one's faith may be associated with ethnicity, patriotism, nationalism, or even with terrorism and authorities may be suspicious of religious groups perceived as having political agendas and organizations. This is especially true in the Central Asian republics where, in the case of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Muslims groups not approved by the State are seen as potential terrorists and suffer harassment or imprisonment. The U.S. refugee admission program provides resettlement opportunities to religious minority members (as identified in the Lautenberg Amendment) with close family ties to the United States. In addition, UNHCR has recently increased the number of referrals to the program.

Refugee admissions based on grounds of religious persecution have been significant in both the Bosnia and Kosovo resettlement efforts. The U.S. refugee admissions program has provided protection to Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians, as well as individuals of other religious minorities. The Department of State will continue to work with the UNHCR, nongovernmental organizations (both faith-based and non-sectarian), human rights groups, and U.S. missions to identify persons who qualify under the 1980 act on religious grounds for whom resettlement is appropriate.

Latin America/Caribbean

In general, religious freedom is widely recognized and enjoyed in Latin America. The key exception is Cuba, where the Government engages in active efforts to monitor and control religious institutions, including surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of clergy and members; evictions from and confiscation of places of worship; and preventive detention of religious activists. It also uses registration as a mechanism of control; by refusing to register new denominations it makes them vulnerable to charges of illegal association. However, despite these obstacles to religious expression, church attendance has grown in recent years.

The U.S. refugee admissions program specifically includes religious minorities and other human rights activists among the list of eligible groups.

Near East and South Asia

Repression of religious minorities is common in some countries in the Middle East and South Asia. In Pakistan discriminatory legislation has encouraged an atmosphere of violence, which has led to acts by extremists against religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, and Zikris. In India responses by state and local authorities to extremist violence were often inadequate. In Saudi Arabia public non-Muslim worship is a criminal offense, as is conversion of a Muslim to another religion. In Iran members of minority religions continue to face arrest, harassment, and discrimination.

Iranian refugees who belong to religious minorities (Baha'is, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Christians) are able to apply directly for U.S. resettlement. In addition, the UNHCR and U.S. embassies in the region facilitate access to the admissions program for individuals of other nationalities who may qualify on religious grounds. The Department of State will continue efforts to improve access to refugee processing through dialog with nongovernmental organizations and human rights groups who may identify victims with valid claims based on grounds of religious persecution. The UNHCR also has addressed religious persecution issues in several regional workshops to increase the sensitivity of protection and resettlement officers to victims of religious persecution.

