

MONACO 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and its public expression and prohibits compelling participation in religious ceremonies. Roman Catholicism is the state religion and state ceremonies often include Catholic rituals. Religious groups have to apply to the government to build a public place of worship and to receive recognition, which provides certain legal rights and privileges. Optional Catholic religious instruction is available in public schools. In February the government again refused to recognize the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the group again appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, where the case was pending at year's end. Without recognition, the group said it could not open a place of worship in the country.

The only private religious schools were Catholic. According to the government, there was insufficient demand for non-Catholic private religious schools. The government said it did not receive any requests from religious groups during the year to build places of worship.

In October representatives from the U.S. Consulate General in Marseille inquired about the government's nonrecognition of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Consulate officials also discussed religious issues with members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim communities.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the U.S. government, the total population is 31,000 (July 2018 estimate), of whom 7,600 are citizens. According to a December 2017 Monegasque government estimate, the total population is 38,300, of whom 9,259 are citizens. The French government estimates 93 percent of the population is Catholic. Protestant officials stated that Protestants are the second largest group after Roman Catholics, representing 2 percent of the population, with 200-220 families. According to the European Jewish Congress and the local Association Culturelle Israelite (Jewish Cultural Association), approximately 1,000 residents, most of whom are noncitizens, are Jewish. According to a long-time Muslim resident, there is a small Muslim community, most of whom are noncitizens from North Africa. The Jehovah's Witnesses report they have 200 members who work in the country, 20 of whom live there. A small number of residents adhere to other religious beliefs.

MONACO

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution guarantees individuals freedom of religion and public worship and protects the freedom to express opinions on all issues, provided no crimes are committed in the exercise of those freedoms. No one may be compelled to participate in the rites or ceremonies of any religion or to observe its days of rest.

The constitution states Roman Catholicism is the state religion.

Any religious group wishing to construct a place of worship in a public space must register a request with the Ministry of Interior.

Associations, including religious ones, must request formal recognition from the Ministry of the Interior, which provides a response within one month. Recognized religious groups obtain certain attendant rights and privileges, such as the ability to hire employees and possess property. The government has granted formal recognition to the Protestant and Jewish communities.

Catholic religious instruction is available in public schools as an option and requires parental authorization. Private schools may provide instruction for religions other than Catholicism.

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

Government Practices

Catholic rituals were generally a part of state ceremonies, including annual national day celebrations.

In January the Jehovah's Witnesses registered a request with the Ministry of Interior for formal recognition by the government. The application followed a 2017 Supreme Court decision annulling a 2016 refusal to recognize the Jehovah's Witnesses by Minister of State (prime minister equivalent) Serge Telle. In February Telle again refused recognition of the country's Association of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witnesses appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, and the case was pending at year's end. Jehovah's Witnesses stated that without recognition they could not establish a headquarters in the country where they could

MONACO

worship and welcome new members. They said the government's refusal to recognize them was due to what the government called the sectarian nature of the group and concerns about proselytism.

The government's stated policy was to consider non-Catholic religious groups' requests to build public places of worship on a case-by-case basis. The government again reported it did not receive any requests for new sites during the year.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The only private religious schools were Catholic. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there was insufficient demand for private schools offering instruction in other religions.

Places of worship included Catholic and Protestant churches and one synagogue. According to religious groups, it was difficult to build new places of worship due to high real estate prices. There were no registered mosques. Muslims worshiped at a mosque in Beausoleil, just across the border in France, and in private prayer rooms in their own residences. Jehovah's Witnesses also worshipped in nearby locations in France, in Menton, Beausoleil, or Nice.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Representatives from the U.S. Consulate General in Marseille contacted the government in October to inquire about its nonrecognition of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Consulate officials met with Jehovah's Witnesses representatives in July and discussed their perceptions of religious freedom in the country.

A consulate representative spoke to a representative of one of the country's two Protestant churches, as well as the Jewish and Muslim communities about their concerns.