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## Slovenia



## International Religious Freedom Report

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
October 2001

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.

[End]

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