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**2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom:  
Slovenia**

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**SLOVENIA**

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

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

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute 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. Government Policies on Freedom of Religion**

**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. The Constitution provides that no person shall be compelled to admit his religious or other beliefs.

There are few formal requirements for recognition as a religion by the Government. The requirements are technical, and there were no reports that any group was denied registration during the period covered by this report. The Government's Office for Religious Communities registers organizations as religious with the Ministry of Interior and also convenes regular meetings of all 35 registered religious communities in the country.

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.

**Religious Demography**

While no data are available on active participation in religious services, citizens identify themselves as follows: about 71 percent are Roman Catholic, 2.5 percent are Serbian Orthodox, and 1.5 percent are Sunni Muslim. Protestants, largely Lutherans concentrated in the eastern part

of the country, constitute less than 1 percent of the population. The remainder of the population considers itself agnostic or atheist.

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

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 toward returning large tracts of forest and other property to the Catholic Church is an frequently cited reason for the paralysis of the denationalization process.

As of mid-1999, only one-third 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.

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 of Minor U.S. Citizens

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 II. 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 Slovenia, 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 III. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. Embassy has discussed worldwide religious freedom worldwide 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.

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