

MARSHALL ISLANDS 2015 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

Religious freedom is protected by law. The constitution provides for the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and belief and to the free exercise of religion.

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

U.S. government officials discussed religious freedom with government officials and met with local religious group leaders and foreign missionaries.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 72,000 (July 2015 estimate). Major religious groups, according to the last census that covered religious affiliation (1999), include the United Church of Christ (formerly Congregational), with 54.8 percent of the population; the Assemblies of God, 25.8 percent; the Roman Catholic Church, 8.4 percent; Bukot nan Jesus (also known as Assembly of God Part Two) 2.8 percent; and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 2.1 percent. Groups that together constitute less than 5 percent of the population include Full Gospel, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Bahais, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Ahmadi Muslims, Hindus, and atheists.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of thought, conscience, and belief, as well as for free exercise of religion and equal protection under the law, regardless of religious beliefs.

There are no requirements for the registration of religious groups.

Government Practices

Governmental functions, by custom, often began and ended with an ordained minister or other church official delivering a Christian prayer. While there was no

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religious education in public schools, most extracurricular school events began and ended with an interdenominational Christian prayer.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Embassy officials discussed religious freedom with the government and met with many local religious group leaders and foreign missionaries. Topics of discussion included the government's posture toward religious groups.

The embassy also intervened with the Ministry of Health on behalf of an Islamic medical nongovernmental organization (NGO) to help ensure that it was given the same support as other religiously affiliated NGOs.