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 19.5 million. According to the 2001 census, 67 percent of citizens consider themselves to be Christian, including 26 percent Roman Catholic and 20 percent Anglican. 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. Among Christians Oriental Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) showed the largest increase in members from 1996 to 2001, 16 percent and 11 percent respectively. In 2001 approximately 15 percent of citizens considered themselves to have no religion, a 1.5 percent decrease from 1996.

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 2001 census, 5,244 persons or less than 0.03 percent of respondents reported practicing aboriginal traditional religions. The 1996 census reported that almost 72 percent of Aborigines practiced some form of Christianity and 16 percent listed no religion. The 2001 census contained no comparable updated data.

Recent increased immigration from Southeast Asia and the Middle East has considerably expanded the numbers of citizens who identify themselves as Buddhists and Muslims. The number of Buddhists increased from 199,812 to 357,813 persons while the number of Muslims increased from 200,885 to 281,578 persons. Between 1996 and 2001, stated affiliation with Buddhism increased by 79 percent, with Hinduism by 41 percent, with Islam by 40 percent, and with Judaism by 5 percent.

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. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. A provision of the Constitution precludes the adoption of a state religion. In recent years, the independent federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) and a Parliamentary Committee have called upon the Government to review protections for religious freedoms and consider enacting new legislation. The federal Workplace Relations Act prohibits termination of employment on the basis of religion. The HREOC may inquire into allegations of discrimination on

religious grounds and, if such allegations are substantiated, may make a report to Parliament. Under the provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act, the HREOC may also mediate a complaint when a plaintiff's religious affiliation is considered tantamount to membership in an ethnic group. Between July 1 and December 31, 2001, the HREOC mediated three cases of alleged discrimination. All of the cases were filed by Jewish complainants against individuals or employers. Settlements were reached between the parties in all three cases, involving either a private agreement, an apology, or financial compensation. Seven of Australia's eight states and territories have laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of a person's religion or ethno-religious background. South Australia is the only jurisdiction that does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion. Tasmania is the only state or territory whose constitution provides citizens with the right to profess and practice their religion. Minority religions are given equal rights to land, status, and building of places of worship.

In a 1998 report, the HREOC concluded that current laws did not adequately meet the country's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and recommended that the Government enact a federal religious freedoms act. In 2000 Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquired into religious freedom in the country and recommended, in part, that the Government respond to the HREOC's 1998 recommendation. The Government had not responded to either the HREOC's or the Committee's recommendations by the end of the period covered by this report.

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 free 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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The HREOC's 1998 report on religious freedom 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 dominance of traditional Christianity in civic life has the potential to marginalize large numbers of citizens. However, the complainants 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.

Several non-governmental organizations promote tolerance and better understanding among religions in the country, both indigenous and non-indigenous. These groups include the Columbian Center for Christian-Muslim Relations, the National Council of Churches in Australia and its affiliated Aboriginal and Islander Commission, and the Australian Council of Christians and Jews.

During September and October 2001, reports of threats of violence and vandalism against religious properties in all state and territory capital cities increased. Government and religious leaders called for tolerance towards minority groups and criticized vandalism of religious properties. In September 2001, Queensland police established a special Islamic Task Force to investigate acts of anti-Muslim violence, following attacks on mosques in that state. Police forces in all states offered increased protection to religious leaders and increased patrols of religious properties.

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 the promoting human rights.

Since late 2001, the U.S. Government in Canberra and U.S. Consulates General in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney have conducted a nationwide outreach program aimed at promoting dialog among all faiths.

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. However, there are several Christian-based schools and eight Chinese schools managed by the Chinese community. The Government detained several Christians in late 2000 and 2001 for alleged subversive activities. These individuals subsequently were released, the last of them in October 2001 after taking an oath of allegiance to the Sultan.

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 2,227 square miles, and its resident population is approximately 340,000. The Government does not publish detailed data on religious affiliation; however, other sources indicate that 67 percent of the population are Muslim, 13 percent are Buddhist, 10 percent are Christian, and another 10 percent adhere to indigenous beliefs or other faiths. 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 workforce that includes Australian, British, Filipino, South Asian, Indonesian, and Malaysian expatriates that includes Muslims, Christians, and Hindus.

There are 101 mosques and prayer halls, 7 Christian churches, several Chinese temples, and 2 Hindu temples in the country.

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 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 Melayu Islam 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 expresses concern about "outsiders" preaching radical Islamic fundamentalist or unorthodox beliefs. In 1995 the Government banned the Al-Arqam movement, a radical Islamic group; it remained 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.

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.

In recent years, religious authorities have participated in raids conducted 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 these 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. As of January 2002, the Islamic Education Department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs was transferred to the Ministry of Education. 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 Jerudong 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 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 officials maintained that the detentions were a security, not a religious, matter. The last of the detainees was released in October 2001 after taking an oath of allegiance to the Sultan.

In 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 new 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 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 Melayu Islam Beraja 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 1988 when the armed forces brutally suppressed massive pro-democracy 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: "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 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 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. While the sharp increase in the level of anti-Muslim violence during the period covered by the previous report (some of which the Government may have tacitly supported, contributed to, or even instigated) has abated, there were reports that restrictions on Muslim travel and worship countrywide have increased, especially since the fall of 2001.

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 in 2001 significantly heightened tensions between the Buddhist and Muslim communities, as it had done in the past.

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy towards the country has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. In September 2001, 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 had so designated Burma in 1999 and 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 majority of the population are Theravada Buddhists, 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. Non-Buddhists tend to be better educated, 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 southcentral region (although many Tamils are Catholic). Islam is practiced widely in Rakhine 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: "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 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.

Since independence in 1948, many of the ethnic minority areas have been bases for armed resistance to the Government. Although the Government has negotiated ceasefire 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.

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. A government directive exempts "genuine" religious organizations from registration; however, in practice only registered organizations can buy or sell property or open bank accounts, which coerces most religious organizations to register. Religious organizations register with the Ministry of Home Affairs with the endorsement of the Min-

istry for Religious Affairs. The State also provides some utility services, such as electricity, at preferential rates to recognized religious organizations.

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; however, at times the Government also deals harshly with efforts to opt out. The Government also funded two state universities to train Buddhist clergy, and one university intended to teach non-Burmese about Burmese Theravada Buddhism.

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. During 2001, the Government objected to the inclusion of a cross in the design of a proposed Christian monument at the site, and, as a result, there was no progress on the project during the period covered by this report.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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"), although the clergy have resisted such control. 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. In November 2001 two nuns at Thayet were arrested and imprisoned for violating this order. Persons other than Buddhist clergy generally were not subject to such severe restrictions on movement.

Since the early 1990's, the Government increasingly has made special efforts to link itself with Buddhism as a means of boosting its own legitimacy. State-controlled news media continue 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 Burma's knowledge of Buddhism with the people of the world," and the main language of instruction is English.

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 to monitor closely the activities of members of all religions, including Buddhism, in part because clergy and congrega-

tion 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. This measure remains in effect; however, it is not strictly enforced.

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 (such as, the Karen and the Kachin) against which the army has fought for decades, although groups that practice Buddhism (like, the Shan) also have waged many of the ethnic insurgencies.

Unlike in past years, there were no reports of clergy being beaten to discourage proselytizing. Local military commanders, who often issued such orders, rarely cited any legal justification for their actions. 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. For example, in early April 2002 the Government suddenly rescinded the Kachin Baptist Convention's permission to hold its 125th anniversary celebration in Kachin state. The celebration, which was expected to attract approximately 30,000 members, was rescheduled for November 2002. The Government initially also denied the Baptist Youth Assembly to hold a rally for 3,000 members in Taunggyi, Shan state in November 2001. In May 2002, the Government allowed the group to hold the rally but attendance was restricted to only 300 members.

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, in 2000 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 Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin state. In Rangoon authorities have instructed various Christian groups to call their worship facilities "social centers" rather than "churches." One source estimated that the Government approves construction of only approximately 10 to 15 new churches per year. 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 do so with informal, rather than formal, approval from local authorities. However, obtaining an informal approval from local authorities creates a tenuous legal situation. When local authorities or conditions change, informal approvals for construction have been rescinded abruptly, construction halted and, in some cases, buildings have been torn down.

Since the 1960's, Christian and Islamic groups have had difficulties importing religious literature into the country. All publications, religious and secular, remain subject to control and censorship. Translations of the Bible into indigenous languages can not be imported legally; however, Bibles can be printed locally in indigenous languages with government permission. During the period covered by this report, there were no reports of the confiscation of Bibles or other religious materials. In January 2002, the German based company Good Books for All was allowed to distribute 10,000 Bibles in the country. In 1999 however, approximately 20,000 illegally imported Bibles were seized in Tamu township in Sagaing division. During 2001, countering rumors that the Bibles were destroyed, authorities informed one religious group that the Bibles were in storage in Rangoon. At the end of the period covered by this report, the disposition of these Bibles remained unclear. Last year, one religious group reported that in 2001 it had received government permission to import 2,000 English-language Bibles, the first such import allowed in 20 years; the Bibles were not imported, however, and in May 2002 the Government reversed its earlier decision.

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 approximately 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.

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 religion is indicated on an identification card. Citizens also are required to indicate their religions on some official application forms, such as, on passports (which have a separate "field" for religion, as well as ethnicity).

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 Rakhine 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. 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, however, 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. There are reports that restrictions on Muslim travel and worship, in particular, have increased countrywide during the period covered by this report.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

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.

There continued to be reports that military officers killed villagers who refused to provide portering services to the Army. For example, in December 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. The military on occasion has killed religious figures as well. On May 30, 2002 troops killed 10 ethnic Karen, including a pastor one day after being ambushed by fighters from the Karen Resistance group.

Government security forces continued to take actions against minority Christian groups, arresting clergy, destroying churches, and prohibiting religious services. In Rangoon during 2001, authorities closed more than 80 home-churches (a traditional

gathering place for many Christians) because they did not have proper authorization to hold religious meetings. At the same time, the authorities have made it increasingly difficult to obtain approval for the construction of "authorized" churches. 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 with little interference from the Government. Since 1990 the Government has supported forced conversions of Christians to Buddhism. The majority of Chins, however, are still Christian. (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 ceasefire with the Government. However, Chin opposition groups emerged in 1988 and subsequently developed active insurgencies against the Government).

Authorities have attempted to prevent 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 tends to use churches, desecrating them for their bases when in remote areas. 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. During the period covered by this report, there were 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 and repeatedly prohibited Christian clergy from proselytizing. On April 4, 2002, two Chin pastors, Reverend That Ci, his son-inlaw Reverend Lian Za Dal, and their families reportedly were arrested in a suburb of Rangoon for having unregistered overnight guests in their home. However, Reverend That Ci had filed the necessary paperwork and had not received a reply. The arrests reportedly were an effort to force them to stop proselytizing so boldly in the Dagon North area. When they refused, they were sent from Dagon North police station to Insein prison. The status of their eight family members is unknown. 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, have sought coercively 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 who converted to Buddhism. Government soldiers stationed in Chin state reportedly were given higher rank and pay if they coerced 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 local villagers to feed army personnel, by force if help is refused, although villagers reportedly were allowed to buy their way out of such work. Local government officials ordered Christian Chin to attend sermons by newly arrived Buddhist monks who disparaged Christianity. Many Christian Chin are pressured and some are forced to attend schools for monks and Buddhist monasteries and then are 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 coerce Chins, including children, to convert to Theravada Buddhism.

In 2001, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization, 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 coerce members of the Naga to convert to Buddhism by means similar to those 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, had forced them to close churches in their villages, and 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 in 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, such as Thandwe, Gwa, and Taung-gut, 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 is punishable by a minimal 3-month sentence while the sentence for a Muslim hitting a Buddhist is 3 years. Last year in northern Rakhine state, the Government systematically destroyed 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 before higher authorities intervened at the request of international agencies. 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.

In 2001 there was a sharp increase in anti-Muslim violence in the country. In February 2001, riots broke out in the town of Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state. There were various, often conflicting, accounts of how the riots began, but reports consistently stated that government security and firefighting 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. An estimated 50 Muslim homes were burned 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. In late March or early April 2001, seven Arakanese politicians were sentenced to 7- to 12-year prison terms for inciting the riots.

In May 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 Union Solidarity and Development of Agriculture 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, of several mosques. An estimated 10 Muslims and 2 Buddhists were killed in this incident. No further information about this incident was available at the end of the period covered by this report.

While there is no direct evidence linking the Government to these violent acts against Muslims, there are reports that the instigators were military or Union Solidarity and Development Association 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.

While anti-Muslim violence abated during the period covered by this report, restrictions on Muslims countrywide reportedly have increased, especially since the fall of 2001. Muslims reportedly have not been allowed to build any new mosques in the country, or to replace those destroyed in the rioting last year. Authorities also have refused to approve requests for gatherings to celebrate traditional Muslim holidays, and have restricted the number of Muslims that can gather in one place. Restrictions on Muslim travel reportedly have increased throughout the country.

In 1991 tens of thousands (according to some reports as many as 300,000 persons) of members of the Muslim Rohingya minority fled from Rakhine 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 because they feared human rights abuses, including religious persecution. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that authorities cooperated in investigating isolated incidents of renewed abuse of repatriated citizens.

In September 2000, according to the Muslim Information Center of Burma (MICB), a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), 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 to stop learning Buddhism in school; the authorities arrested the four elders for their actions. No further information was available about this incident during the period covered by this report.

The Government continued to prevent Buddhist monks from calling for democracy and political dialog with pro-democracy 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 was no reliable estimate of the number of Buddhist clergy in prisons or labor camps at 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 in August 1999, government authorities in the town of Tachileik had destroyed two monasteries and dispersed over 50 monks without a proper court order and without compensation. On August 1, 2001, at a religious ceremony in Mandalay, a Buddhist monk reportedly was arrested for delivering a sermon critical of the prevailing economic and political situation. There was no information available on whether he was later released or if he remains in prison.

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 Rakhine 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. In July 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; in August 2000, the same troops again con-

scripted 87 workers from the same town and forced them to build a shelter for the lumber and tin sheets taken from the dismantled monasteries.

On June 14, 2002, Aung San Suu Kyi, (leader of the National League for Democracy), traveled to Karen state to visit Thamanya Sayadaw, a famous monk, without incident. Suu Kyi had been released from house arrest in May 2002. Thamanya Sayadaw is revered by the wife of General Than Shwe, the Head of State and Chairman of the SPDC.

Forced Religious Conversion

Since 1990 government authorities and security forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, have sought to coerce Chins, including children, to convert to Theravada Buddhism.

According to the Islamic Republic News Agency, there are credible reports that hundreds of Christian tribal Nagas in the country have been converted forcibly to Buddhism by the country's military. The persons were lured with promises of government jobs to convert to Buddhism, while those who resisted were abused and kept as bonded labor by the military.

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 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 Rakhine 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 print 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 that 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 began to administer the regions that it had conquered.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy toward the country 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 the country. The U.S. Government also has suspended all Overseas Private Investment Corporation financial services in support of U.S. investment in the country, ended active promotion of trade with the country, and halted issuance of visas to high government officials and their immediate family members. It also has opposed all assistance to the Government by international financial institutions, and urged the governments of other countries to take similar actions.

In November 2000, the U.S. Government actively supported the decision of the International Labor Organization to implement sanctions against the regime 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 citizens, scholars, representatives of other governments, international media representatives, and international business representa-

tives. 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 2001, 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 also had designated Burma a country of particular concern in 1999 and 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. The remainder of the population includes approximately 700,000 Muslims, predominantly ethnic Chams, who generally are located in towns and rural fishing villages on the banks of the Tonle Sap and Mekong rivers and in Kampot province. 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 which represents 6 percent of the population; the traditional Iman-San branch which represents 3 percent of the population; and the Kadiani branch which also represents 3 percent of the population. The country's small Christian community, although growing, constitutes less than 1 percent of the population. More than 100 separate Christian organizations or denominations operate freely throughout the country and include more than 1,000 congregations. Other religious organizations with small followings include the Vietnamese Cao Dai religion and the Baha'i Faith, with approximately 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 the 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 approval 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 the intervention of 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.

In October 2001, the Ministry of Cults and Religions issued a circular on "maintaining order in the Islamic religion in the Kingdom of Cambodia," which would have imposed new restrictions on mosques, including requiring Ministry approval for certain normal activities, particularly those that involved contact with Muslim foreigners. The Prime Minister canceled the circular 3 days later, describing it as contrary to government policy on freedom 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 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 Constitution disallows 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 religious issues. The Cham Muslims generally are integrated well into society, enjoy positions of prominence in business and in the Government, and face no reported persecution.

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.

There are ecumenical and interfaith organizations, which often are supported by funding from foreign public or private 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. 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. The Government tries to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of groups that could constitute sources of authority outside of the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and it cracks down on groups that it perceives to pose a threat. Despite these efforts at government control, membership in many faiths is growing rapidly.

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience remained poor, especially for many unregistered religious groups and spiritual movements such as the Falun Gong. The Government continued its crackdown on unregistered churches, temples, and mosques.

In general unregistered religious groups continued to experience varying degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. Members of 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, "underground" religious leaders reported increased pressure either to register with the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) and to be affiliated with and supervised by official party organizations linked to the legally recognized churches or to close their facilities. 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 proselytize openly. 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 persons who attend services at 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 Government continued its repression of groups that it determined to be "cults" in general and of the Falun Gong in particular. Various sources report that thousands of Falun Gong adherents have been arrested, detained, and imprisoned, and that several hundred or more Falun Gong adherents have died in detention since 1999.

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 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. The issue of religious freedom also was raised during the official U.S.-China dialog in October 2001. In October 2001, 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 country also was so designated in 1999 and 2000.

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 April 2002 government white paper, there are more than 200 million religious adherents, representing a great variety of beliefs and practices. According to this official publication, the country has more than 100,000 sites for religious activities, 300,000 clergy, more than 3,000 religious organizations, and 74 training centers for clergy. Most religious adherents profess eastern faiths, but tens of millions adhere to Christianity or Islam. 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 more than 10,000 Taoist monks and nuns and more than 1,000 Taoist temples.

Traditional folk religions (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors) have been revived, are practiced by hundreds of millions of citizens, and are tolerated to varying degrees as loose affiliates of Taoism, Buddhism, or ethnic minority cultural practices.

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 16,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries and more than 320,000 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 impossible 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 to 15 of whom may be in prison or under house arrest.

The Government maintains that there are as many as 15 million registered Protestants, 20,000 clergy, more than 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 (or Wheel of the Law, also known as Falun Dafa) practitioners have varied widely; the Government claimed that prior to its harsh crackdown on the Falun Gong beginning in 1999, there may have been as many as 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong in the country. Followers of Falun Gong claim that there are more than 100 million adherents worldwide. Some experts estimated that the true number of Falun Gong adherents in the country before the crackdown was in the tens of millions. One credible source estimated that there were 1 million Falun Gong practitioners in the country during the period covered by this report. 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 the country who lives 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 to prevent the rise of competing possible sources of authority outside of the control of the Government.

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 were 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 is responsible for monitoring and judging the legitimacy of religious activity. The RAB and the 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. 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. Unregistered groups also frequently claim that theological compromises, lack of doctrinal freedom, and stricter control over sermons by the RAB result from registration, which is why they do not register with the Government. Unofficial groups claimed that authorities often refused them registration without explanation. The Government contended that these refusals mainly were the result of these groups' lack of adequate facilities.

In February 2002, Freedom House published secret documents purportedly issued by the Government between 1999 and 2001. The documents outlined the Government's intent to repress religious expression outside of government control, and to use harsh criminal penalties in a systematic effort to eliminate unregistered religious groups.

The Government has banned all groups that it has determined to be "cults," including the Falun Gong and the Zhong Gong movements (Zhong Gong is a qigong discipline with some mystical tenets). After the revised Criminal Law came into effect in 1997, offenses related to membership in unapproved cults and religious groups were classified as crimes of 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, including by 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 through neighboring countries, especially Pakistan, in the past several years; 5,000 made the Hajj 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.

During the period covered by this report, local officials destroyed several unregistered places of worship around the country; however, there were no reports of the widespread razing of churches in the eastern part of the country, as there were in the period covered by the previous report (particularly in the coastal city of Wenzhou). However, the Government also has restored or rebuilt churches, temples, mosques, and monasteries damaged or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and allowed the reopening of some seminaries, although the pace and scope of restoration activity has varied from locality to locality. Nonetheless, there are far fewer temples, churches, or mosques than existed 35 years ago.

The CCP Central Committee held a national religion work conference in Beijing from December 10 to 12, 2001. All senior members of the Party and senior government officials attended, and both President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji gave speeches. Many religious adherents hoped that the conference would result in a loosening of the registration requirements for underground places of worship. However, in late March 2002, RAB Deputy Director Wang Zuoan told reporters that, although the Government was prepared to introduce administrative measures that would enable mainstream religions to operate more smoothly, such changes might be ready only in "1 or 2 years." Some academics who attended believed that, as a result of the conference, the authorities might loosen registration requirements gradually for more mainstream religious groups while intensifying efforts to destroy "cults." No progress had been noted regarding the loosening of registration requirements by the end of the period covered by this report. However, following the conference, there was significant debate within the Party over the role religion should play in society, and some Party members criticized the traditional Marxist concept of opposing religion.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom and freedom of conscience remained poor, especially for members of some unregistered religious groups and spiritual movements such as the 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. The Government tends to perceive unregulated religious gatherings or groups as a potential challenge to its authority, and 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. During the period covered by this report, the Government continued its general crackdown on unregistered churches, temples, and mosques. Police closed underground mosques, temples, and seminaries, as well as some Catholic churches and Protestant "house churches," many with significant memberships, properties, financial resources, and networks, and banned groups that it considered to be "cults." Several unregistered church leaders reported growing pressure by local authorities to register after the December 2001 work conference on religion. Despite these efforts at control, 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. The Government also makes demands on the clergy or leadership of registered groups, for example requiring that they publicly endorse government policies or denounce Falun Gong. The Government continued its repression of the Falun Gong spiritual movement and of cults in general. As in past years, the Government moved against houses of worship outside its control that grew too large or espoused beliefs that it considered threatening to "state security." Overall, the basic policy of permitting religious activity to take place relatively unfettered in government-approved sites and under government control remained unchanged.

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 were signs of greater government concern and new restrictions, especially on syncretic groups that blend tenets from a number of religious beliefs.

In 1995 the State Council and the CCP's Central Committee issued a circular labeling a number of religious organizations "cults" and making them illegal. Among these were the "Shouters" (founded in the United States in 1962), Eastern Lightning, the Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), the Full Scope Church, the Spirit Sect, the New Testament Church, and the Guan Yin (also known as Guanyin Famin, or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy). Subsequent orders in later years also banned the Lord God Sect, the Established King Church, the Unification Church, the Family of Love, the Dami Mission, and other groups.

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 repression of the Falun Gong spiritual movement continued. There have been thousands of cases of individuals receiving criminal, administrative, and extrajudicial punishment for engaging in Falun Gong practices, admitting that they believed in Falun Gong, or simply refusing to criticize the organization or its founder. The 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.

The authorities also continued their general crackdown on other groups considered to be "cults," such as the Xiang Gong, Guo Gong, and Zhong Gong qigong groups, some of which reportedly had a following comparable to that of the Falun Gong. In August 2001, police in Jiangsu arrested Shen Chang, the leader of a qigong group, and charged him with organizing gatherings aimed at disturbing social order and tax evasion.

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 was a great deal of variation in how local authorities handled unregistered religious groups. In certain regions, government supervision of religious activity was minimal, and registered and unregistered churches existed openly side by side and were treated similarly by the authorities. In such areas, many congregants worshipped in both types of churches. In other regions, local implementing regulations call for strict government oversight of religion, and authorities cracked down on unregistered churches and their members. For example, Zhejiang province has restrictive religious affairs regulations that stipulate that "illegal" property and income would be confiscated from those who: "1) preside over or organize religious activities at places other than those for religious activities or at places not approved by a religious affairs department; 2) do missionary work outside the premises of a place of religious activity; and 3) sponsor religious training activities without obtaining the approval of a religious affairs department at or above the county level." Implementing regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and Party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce vigorously government policy regarding unregistered churches.

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.

Many house churches, which generally are made up of family members and friends, conduct activities similar to those of home Bible study groups, and were tol-

erated by the authorities as long as they remained small and unobtrusive. House churches reportedly encounter difficulties when their membership grows, when they arrange for the regular use of facilities for the specific purpose of conducting religious activities, or when they forge links with other unregistered groups.

In some areas, there were reports of harassment of churches by local RAB, 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 were said to try to avoid doing so by denying registration. Official churches in some cases also 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 were reports that RAB officials have requested illegal "donations" from churches in their jurisdictions as a means of raising extra revenue or that they sometimes appropriate a percentage of funds raised at local churches.

During the period covered by this report, local officials destroyed several unregistered places of worship around the country; however, there were no reports of the widespread razing of churches, as there were in the period covered by the previous report (particularly in the coastal city of Wenzhou). Folk religions have been labeled as "feudal superstition" and sometimes are repressed; local authorities have destroyed thousands of local shrines. In early 2002, according to the Guangzhou-based Southern Metropolis Daily newspaper, a squad of 90 policemen demolished a small Taoist temple in a central residential area of Guangzhou. The temple, which had escaped official notice for 20 years, was branded a "center of superstitious activity." In April 2001, the police demolished a partially constructed Catholic church in Hebei province for not having a proper building permit. Christian leaders in several parts of the country reported that local officials have been reluctant to return church property that was confiscated after the 1949 Communist revolution. 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.

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, resulting in a shortage of trained clerics between the ages of 35 and 65. Thus, as senior clerics over the age of 65 retire, there are relatively few experienced clerics to replace them. The Government permits registered religions to train clergy and allows limited numbers of Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and Buddhist clergy to go abroad for additional religious studies, but some religious students have had difficulty in obtaining approval to study abroad. In most cases, foreign organizations provide funding for such training programs. Some Catholic clerics also have complained that they were forced to bribe local RAB officials before being allowed to enter seminaries. Due to government prohibitions, unofficial or underground churches have particularly significant problems training clergy and many clergy receive only limited and inadequate preparation.

Most religious institutions depend upon their own resources to cover operating costs. Contributions from church members are common among both Catholics and Protestants. Frequently, religious institutions run side businesses selling religious items. Some run strictly commercial businesses such as restaurants. Sometimes the Government funds repairs for temples or shrines that have cultural or historic significance; however, there were reports that these funds were allocated only to registered churches, depending upon how cooperative with local authorities they were perceived to be.

The law does not prohibit religious believers explicitly from holding public office; however, Party membership is required for almost all high level positions in government and state-owned businesses and organizations, and Communist Party officials state that Party membership and religious belief are incompatible. This has a disproportionate effect in such minority-inhabited areas as Xinjiang and Tibet. The CCP 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. 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." Party and PLA military personnel have been expelled for adhering to the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

However, according to government sources, up to 20 to 25 percent of Communist Party officials in certain localities engage in some kind of religious activity. Most officials who practice a religion are Buddhist or practice a form of 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.

In 1999 the Party's Central Committee issued a document directing 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 the 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 on the mainland. The Government's refusal to allow the official Catholic church to recognize the authority of the Papacy in many fundamental 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. The Government insists that Catholic Patriotic Association officials, clergy, and believers be "patriotic" and "law abiding." When government policy and Papal authority conflict—as they do, for example, on abortion or birth control—state policy takes precedence, leaving priests with the dilemma of how to advise their practitioners.

Tensions between the Vatican and the Government have caused leadership problems within the official Catholic Church in the country due to the friction between some bishops who have been consecrated with secret Vatican approval (or who obtained such secret approval after their consecration) and others consecrated without such approval. While both Chinese and Vatican authorities state 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. Most underground Catholic priests have indicated they are unwilling to accept the authority of bishops consecrated without Vatican approval. Newly nominated bishops seeking secret Papal approval frequently find themselves at odds with other church leaders who are sympathetic to the central Government, and who insist that consecrations of new bishops be conducted by 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 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 was evidence that the official Protestant seminary's "theological reconstruction campaign," during which fundamentalists were purged from the Nanjing Seminary, ended. There were no reports that seminary professors or of Protestant preachers were purged for holding theological perspectives that differed from those held by Bishop Ding Guangxun, national leader of the official Protestant church. Foreign teachers were invited to teach at both Catholic and Protestant seminaries during 2001 and 2002.

There are thriving Muslim communities in many areas, but government sensitivity to these communities varied widely. In areas where ethnic unrest has occurred, especially among the Uighurs in Xinjiang, officials continued to restrict the building of mosques and prohibited the teaching of Islam to children. In 2001 the authorities in Kashgar reportedly limited the traditional post-Ramadan celebration of rozi bayram, which usually lasts a number of days, to 2 days, and security was heavy during the celebrations. In addition to the restrictions on practicing religion seen throughout the country on Party members and government officials, in Xinjiang teachers, professors, and university students are not allowed openly to

practice religion. However, in other areas, particularly in areas populated by the Hui ethnic group, there was substantial mosque construction and renovation, and apparent freedom to worship. After a series of violent incidents in Xinjiang beginning in 1997 and continuing into 2002, including reported bombings in Xinjiang and other parts of the country attributed to Uighur separatists, police cracked down on Muslim religious activity and places of worship accused of supporting separatism in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. Because the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region government regularly lists together those involved in "ethnic separatism, illegal religious activities, and violent terrorism," it often was unclear whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking to worship, those peacefully seeking their political goals, or those engaged in violence. Some Uighurs and other Muslims have accused the Government of using the ongoing war against terrorism as an excuse to intensify the repression of religious activity in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang provincial-level Communist Party and Government officials repeatedly called for stronger management of religious affairs and for the separation of religion from administrative matters. For example, on March 6, 2002, State Councilor Ismail Amat (an ethnic Uighur) told a delegation of National People's Congress delegates that, "while enjoying the rights of religious freedom, the citizens who have religious beliefs must place the basic interests of the State and the people before everything else," and that "we must not use the freedom of religious belief as an excuse to abandon or to dodge the management of religious affairs by the State." The official Xinjiang Legal Daily newspaper reported 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 implement more vigorously 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. In 2000 the official Xinjiang Daily newspaper reported 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 authorities also initiated a campaign to discourage overt religious attire such as veils and to discourage religious marriage ceremonies. There were numerous official media reports that the authorities confiscated "illegal religious publications" in Xinjiang.

Abbots and monks in predominantly Tibetan areas outside of the Tibetan Autonomous Region report that they have greater freedom to worship and conduct religious training than their coreligionists within the TAR. Diplomats have seen pictures of a number of Tibetan religious figures, including the Dalai Lama, openly displayed in parts of Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces. However, beginning in June 2001, the Government ordered thousands of monks and nuns to leave the Serthar Tibetan Buddhist Institute (also known Larung Gar), located in the Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province. The Government maintained that the facility was reduced in size for sanitation and hygiene reasons. Critics argued that the authorities were concerned that many of the students at Serthar were ethnic Han Chinese who might become sympathetic to Tibetan issues. At its peak, it housed as many as 7,000 monks and nuns, including 1,000 Han Chinese, making it the largest concentration of monks and nuns in the country. Following the expulsions, the population dropped to approximately 1,400; by the end of the period covered by this report, the population had risen to approximately 4,000 monks and nuns. The authorities also destroyed the residences of many of the monks and nuns who had been at Serthar. Foreign observers believed that the authorities moved against the Institute because of its size and the influence of its charismatic founder, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok. Officials continued to monitor the activities of Larung Gar, but Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was able to return to Larung Gar by the end of the period covered by this report. According to the Tibet Information Network (TIN), the authorities carried out a similar campaign at Yachen Gar in Baiyul county, another major monastic encampment in Sichuan province. The authorities reportedly ordered more than 800 monks and nuns of the 6,000 to 7,000 total to leave the encampment by mid-October 2001. Hundreds of students from throughout China and from abroad reportedly had been studying at Yachen Gar prior to this action; foreign students reportedly were ordered to leave in 2001. In February 2002 a young Buddhist monk reportedly was arrested in Aba City, Sichuan for protest activity (handing out pictures of the Dalai Lama, posting pro-democracy leaflets, and distributing info on China's human rights violations). He reportedly did not advocate Tibetan independence. (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, the 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 in an historic Shanghai synagogue, which was restored as a museum in 1998. 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 cities, but its membership is limited strictly 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 2000, codified many existing rules involving foreigners, including a ban on proselytizing. However, for the most part, the authorities allowed foreign nationals to preach to other foreigners, to bring in religious materials for personal use, and to preach to Chinese citizens at churches, mosques, and temples at the invitation of registered religious organizations. Foreigners legally are barred from conducting missionary activities; however, foreign Christians teaching English and other languages on college campuses openly profess their faith with minimum interference from the 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 the central part of the country also offer training to teenagers and young adults. However, the Hong Kong Catholic Church's contacts with its mainland counterparts in the official Catholic Church remained on hold due to restrictions on religious groups imposed by the Government.

The increase in the number of Christians in the country has resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for Bibles. One printing company, a joint venture with an overseas Christian organization, has printed 25 million Bibles since its founding in 1987, including Bibles in Braille and minority languages, such as Korean, Jingbo, Lisu, Lahu, Miao, and Yao. Although Bibles can be purchased at some bookstores, they cannot be ordered directly from publishing houses by individuals. However, they were available for purchase at most officially recognized churches, at which many house church members buy their Bibles without incident. Nonetheless, some underground Christians hesitated 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 in rural areas, mostly due to logistical problems in dissemination. 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. On January 28, 2002, Hong Kong resident Li Guangqiang (Lai Kwong-keung) was sentenced to 2 years in prison for smuggling annotated versions of the Bible onto the mainland. Li had been detained in May 2001 and was released in early February 2002 on medical parole after Christian groups and political leaders around the world expressed concern over his detention. Two mainland colleagues of Li's, Lin Xifu and Yu Zhudi, were arrested along with him and remained in prison at the end of the period covered by this report. There have been credible reports that the authorities sometimes confiscate Bibles in raids on house churches.

The Government teaches atheism in schools. The participation of minors in religious education is prohibited by regulation, but enforcement varies widely from region to region. In some Muslim areas, minors attend religious schools in addition to state-run schools. In some areas, large numbers of young persons 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. The Government has stated that there are 10 colleges conducting Islamic higher education and 2 other Islamic schools in Xinjiang operating with government support. Some young Muslims study outside of the country in Muslim religious schools.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, unapproved religious and spiritual groups remained under scrutiny and, in some cases, harsh repression. Although there was no significant change in the central Government's official policy toward religious freedom, the unremitting campaign against Falun Gong and other "heret-

ical cults," plus frequent statements by senior leaders on the need to "strengthen religious work" (or increase supervision of religious groups by the RAB), had an inevitable spillover effect.

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.

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.

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 from 76,500 persons to more than 90,000 persons between 1998 and 1999, the most recent figures available. Most experts agree that this the increase primarily was due to the Government's crackdown, begun in mid-1999, on spiritual groups like Falun Gong, the Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui), evangelical Christian groups, and localized Buddhist groups such as the Guan Yin (also known as Guanyin Famin, or the Way of the Goddess of Mercy), Protestant house churches, and the underground Roman Catholic Church. Leaders of unauthorized groups in particular often are the targets of harassment, interrogations, detention, and physical abuse (including torture). Members of these groups also may be subject to such treatment. 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 undertrained clergy. Others acknowledge that some individuals may be exploiting the reemergence of interest in religion for personal gain.

Many religious leaders and adherents have been arrested and sentenced to prison terms. On February 5, 2002, a Xiamen court sentenced Huang Aiping, Li Wulong, and Ji Qingjun to 7 years in prison for "using a cult organization to violate the law." The three were members of the Blood and Water Holy Spirit Full Gospel Preaching Team, which was founded in Taiwan and banned on the mainland in 1996 as an "illegal infiltration organization." In December 2001, Gong Shengliang, founder of the South China Church, and his niece Li Ying were sentenced to death on a wide range of criminal charges, including rape, arson, and assault. Both remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report while appealing their sentences. Two members of the South China Church claimed that police tortured them until they agreed to sign statements claiming that they had been raped by Gong. Other persons arrested along with Gong and his niece were sentenced to prison for periods varying between 2 years and life. There was an unconfirmed report that at least 14 persons were arrested while authorities sought Pastor Gong, many of whom allegedly were beaten and tortured. A group of Protestants in Liaoning continue to contest the November 2000 arrest of local house church leader Li Baozhi, who allegedly continues to be held for association with the banned Full Scope Church. Li reportedly was sentenced to 2 years of reeducation through labor; two other persons were sentenced to 1 year of reeducation through labor for association with the Full Scope Church. Liaoning Christians have visited Li in prison, petitioned local officials for his release, and published their complaints on the Internet. They have stated that Li and his church are not affiliated with the Full Scope Church.

Local authorities also use an administrative process to punish members of unregistered religious groups. Citizens may be sentenced by a nonjudicial panel of police and local authorities to up to 3 years in prison-like facilities called reeducation-through-labor camps. Many religious detainees and prisoners were held in such facilities during the period covered by this report. In December 2001, Shui Xinlong, Wang Maochen, and other leaders of the Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui) were sentenced to reeducation-through-labor in Lintao City, Gansu province. 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 wail 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 official 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. Again in 2002, the authorities detained Catholic underground Bishop Jia Zhiguo of Hebei for several days before the start of Holy

Week, allegedly in an attempt to pressure him to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. The whereabouts of underground 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 in 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 nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), 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 2001 in Beijing, although they later claimed that he had been released. In February 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 was no new information on his whereabouts or physical condition.

Fujian Province clerics reported that, while there had been no recent signs of a general crackdown against underground Catholics as was seen in 1999 and 2000, the April 2001 detention of two underground priests led to a generalized fear that other detentions might follow. Protestant church members in some parts of the country complained that central government support for local crackdowns on Fujian-based Shouters and Hubei's South China Church had created a sense of intimidation in their communities. Some underground Catholic and Protestant leaders reported increased pressure to register their congregations after the December 2001 Central Committee Work Conference on Religion.

Since the Government banned the Falun Gong in 1999 and began a comprehensive nationwide repression of the movement, the practice of Falun Gong or possession of its literature has been sufficient grounds for practitioners to receive punishments ranging from loss of employment and educational opportunities to imprisonment. Some Falun Gong members have been tortured in custody and there have been reports that several hundred or more Falun Gong adherents have died in detention since 1999. Falun Gong members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications may be sentenced to 3 to 7 years in prison, and Falun Gong leaders may be sentenced to up to 7 years or more in prison.

According to some reports, the Government intensified its harsh and comprehensive campaign against the Falun Gong during the early spring of 2001. After the January 2001 self-immolations of five individuals claiming to be Falun Gong practitioners in Tiananmen Square, the Government initiated a comprehensive effort to round up practitioners not already in custody, and sanctioned the use of high pressure indoctrination tactics against such individuals 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 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. These tactics reportedly resulted in large numbers of practitioners pledging to renounce the movement. Perhaps due to the decreased number of practitioners in those regions, the campaign against Falun Gong seemed to have abated in the eastern and southern parts of the country by mid-2002.

Police often used excessive force when detaining peaceful Falun Gong protesters. During the period covered by this report, there were numerous credible reports that police and security force personnel abused, tortured, and even killed Falun Gong practitioners. In February 2002, Chengdu University associate professor Zhang Chuansheng, a longtime Falun Gong practitioner, was arrested in his hometown and taken to Chengdu's main prison, where he died 3 days later. His family, who saw Zhang's body after his death, claimed that he had been beaten severely. Prison authorities claimed that he died of a heart attack.

According to the Falun Gong, hundreds of its practitioners have been confined to psychiatric institutions and forced to take medications or undergo electric shock treatment against their will.

Although more than a dozen Falun Gong practitioners have been sentenced to prison for up to 18 years for the crime of "endangering state security," most Falun Gong members convicted of crimes by 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. In addition, many thousands of Falun Gong practitioners are serving extrajudicial administrative sentences in reeducation-through-labor camps.

The number of protests by individuals or small groups of practitioners at Tiananmen Square and around the country decreased considerably during the period covered by this report. Many attributed the decrease to the public outcry following the January 2001 self-immolation of five Falun Gong adherents on Tiananmen Square. Others attribute the decline to the success of the Government crackdown on Falun Gong, which, by the end of 2001, essentially had eliminated public manifestations of the movement. In August 2001, four persons who allegedly organized the self-immolations were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 7 years to life. The authorities briefly detained foreign practitioners who attempted to unfurl Falun Gong banners in Tiananmen Square or pass out Falun Gong leaflets, generally deporting them after 1 or 2 days. Some foreign Falun Gong practitioners credibly reported being mistreated while in custody.

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 that public protests are likely.

Officials acknowledged arresting 18 Falun Gong members who hacked into a Changchun, Jilin province cable television station on March 5, 2002 and aired Falun Gong videos on the channel for approximately 45 minutes. Those arrested in connection with this incident were charged with damaging cable transmission lines, using a cult to hamper social order, and "interfering in the masses' normal lives," and could face prison sentences of 15 years or more. According to foreign media reports, Falun Gong practitioners interfered with cable television signals on several other occasions during the first half of 2002.

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 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. 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 or Easter. 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 occasional tension 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. In February 2002, President Bush gave a speech at Tsinghua University in Beijing that was broadcast nationwide, during which he called upon the Government to

show more religious tolerance. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates also collect information about abuses and maintain contacts with a wide spectrum of religious leaders within in the country's religious communities, including with 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 United States on international visitor programs to see firsthand the role that religion plays in U.S. society. The Embassy also brings experts on religion from the United States to the country to speak about the role of religion in American life and public policy.

In July 2001, the Government agreed to resume the official U.S.China bilateral human rights dialog, which had been suspended since 1999. The dialog was held in October 2001 and religious freedom was a key agenda item.

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 April 2002, Religious Affairs Bureau officials refused to meet with the Department of State's Undersecretary for Global Affairs.

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 arrests of Falun Gong followers, the crackdowns on Tibetan Buddhists and on Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, and the arrests of Christian ministers and believers.

In October 2001, 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 country also was so designated in 1999 and 2000.

TIBET

(The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)hereinafter referred to as "Tibet"—to be part of the People's Republic of China. The 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 and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit many 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 views 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. Religious practice faced ongoing restrictions during the period covered by this report, but overall enforcement of such restrictions was less strict than in the period covered by the previous report. Nonetheless, the level of religious repression in Tibet remained high, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom remained poor.

Although the "patriotic education" campaign begun in the mid-1990's officially has concluded, patriotic education activities continued at a lower level of intensity. Core requirements of "patriotic education," such as the renunciation of the Dalai Lama and the acceptance of Tibet as a part of China, continue and engender resentment on the part of Tibetan Buddhists. Many monks and nuns continue to serve prison terms for their resistance to "patriotic education." 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, some converts reportedly are subject to social pressure and some reportedly have been disinherited by family members who practice Buddhism.

The U.S. Government continued 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 specific cases with the authorities, and by requesting information about specific incidents.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The TAR has a total area of 471,700 square miles, and according to the 2000 census, its official population is approximately 2.6 million. Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Many ethnic Tibetan government officials and some ethnic Tibetan Communist Party members quietly practice Tibetan Buddhism. While officials state that there is no Falun Gong activity in the TAR, reports indicate there are small numbers of practitioners among the ethnic Han population. Small numbers of Tibetan and Han Muslims and Christians also live in the region.

Chinese officials state that Tibet has more than 46,000 Buddhist monks and nuns and more than 1,700 monasteries, temples, and religious sites. Officials have cited these same figures since 1996, although since then the numbers of monks and nuns have dropped significantly at many sites as a result of the "patriotic education" campaign and 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 belong to religious orders. These numbers represent only the TAR; more than 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 many 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" determined to split China. Both the central government and local officials often insist that dialog with the Dalai Lama essentially is 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 remains suspicious of Tibetan Buddhism in general due to its links to the Dalai Lama; this suspicion also applies to Tibetan Buddhist religious adherents who do not demonstrate explicitly their loyalty to the State.

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 a few 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 associated closely 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.

Although by regulation monks are not permitted to register and formally join a monastery prior to the age of 18, many younger boys in fact continue the tradition of entering monastic life. Young novices, who traditionally served as attendants to older monks while receiving a basic monastic education and awaiting formal ordination, continue to be admitted to some TAR monasteries. However, monasteries require government approval to admit trainee monks, and some monasteries have been unable to secure such approval. In some large monasteries young novices have been expelled in the past for being underage. Because these novices were not regular, registered members of the monasteries, the authorities denied that there was a significant decline in the numbers of monks at such sites. However, there were no reports of such expulsions during the period covered by this report.

Beginning in June 2001, Chinese authorities ordered thousands of monks and nuns to leave the Serthar Tibetan Buddhist Institute located in the Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province (also known as the Larung Gar monastic encampment). The authorities also destroyed the residences of many of the monks and nuns who had been at Serthar. Foreign observers believed that the authorities moved against the Institute because of its size and the influence of its charismatic founder, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok. According to the Tibet Information Network (TIN), the authorities carried out a similar campaign at Yachen Gar in Baiyul county, another major monastic encampment in Sichuan province. The authorities reportedly ordered more than 800 of the 6,000 to 7,000 resident monks and nuns to leave the encampment by mid-October 2001. (see also Section II of the China International Religious Freedom Report for information on these incidents).

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.

With the advent of DMC responsibility for management of all monastery funds generated by entrance tickets or donated by pilgrims, funds no longer are made available to partially support monks engaged in full time study. Such "scholar monks" now must engage in income-generating activities at least part of the time. Experts are concerned that fewer monks will be qualified to serve as teachers in the future as a result. The erosion of the quality of religious teaching in the TAR continues to be a focus of concern. The quality and availability of high-level religious teachers in the TAR is inadequate, as many now are in exile, and older teachers are not being replaced.

Government officials state that the "patriotic education campaign," which began in the mid-1990's and dispatched work teams to conduct intensive mandatory political training sessions for nuns and monks at religious sites, is completed. Officials acknowledge, however, that "patriotic education" for monks and nuns continues on a regular basis at religious sites and that monks and nuns continue to undergo mandatory political training or "patriotic education." Training sessions are aimed at enforcing compliance with government regulations, and either cowing or weeding out monks and nuns who refuse to adopt the Party line and who remain sympathetic to the Dalai Lama. Sessions are conducted on topics such as relations between Tibetans and Han Chinese, Tibet's historical status as part of China, and the role of the Dalai Lama in attempting to "split" the country. Monks and nuns often are required to demonstrate their patriotism by signing a declaration agreeing to reject independence for Tibet; to reject Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama; to reject and denounce the Dalai Lama; to recognize the unity of China and Tibet; and not to listen to the Voice of America or Radio Free Asia. Some non-compliant monks and nuns have been expelled from religious sites. Yet others departed "voluntarily" rather than denounce the Dalai Lama. Despite, and in some cases because of, these efforts to control the Buddhist clergy and monasteries, anti-government sentiment remains strong.

On average, approximately 2,500 Tibetans enter Nepal each year seeking refugee status to escape conditions in Tibet, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR reported that 1,381 Tibetan refugees transited Nepal in 2001; significantly fewer than in previous years. The decline was due in part to the ongoing Maoist insurgency in Nepal. It is difficult for Tibetans to travel to India for religious purposes. Nevertheless, many Tibetans, including monks and nuns, visited India via third countries and returned to the TAR after temporary

stays. Tibetans can return from exile to the TAR, although the approval process is cumbersome.

After the Karmapa, the leader of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kargyu school and one of the most influential religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism, secretly left his home monastery and traveled to India in December 1999, the authorities increased efforts to exert control over the process for finding and educating reincarnated lamas. In January 2000, the Government approved the selection of 2-year-old Sonam Phuntsog as the 7th 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 lives with his family under heavy guard in his residence near the monastery; the authorities tightly controlled access to the area. Another young reincarnate lama, Pawo Rinpoche, who was recognized by the Karmapa in 1994 as the reincarnation of an important Karma Kargyu lineage, and is approximately 8 years of age, has been denied access to his religious tutors, and the authorities reportedly require him to attend a regular Chinese school. The Government continued to insist that Gyaltsen Norbu, the boy it selected in 1995, is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation rather than Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who was selected by the Dalai Lama. The authorities tightly control all aspects of his life, and he has appeared publicly in Beijing and Tibet only on rare occasions. These 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.

Government officials maintain that possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama is not illegal. Currently, possession of pictures of the Dalai Lama appears to be on the rise, and many Tibetan Buddhists discreetly display them in private. However, in at least one prefecture, possession of such pictures resulted in arrest during the period covered by this report. A ban on these pictures is enforced sporadically, and Tibetans are cautious about displaying them. Pictures of the Dalai Lama may not be purchased openly in the TAR.

The Government continued to ban pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama. However, government authorities at both the regional and city levels have had pictures of Gyaltsen Norbu, the "official" Panchen Lama, printed for use in public and private religious displays, although very few photos of him are on display.

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 1999 campaign to promote atheism and science in government offices and schools appears to have wound down, although regular political training for government cadres continues to promote atheism. The campaign also was launched in part to stem "the Dalai clique's reactionary infiltration." The authorities threatened to terminate the employment of government employees whose children are studying in India, usually in schools run by the Tibetan refugee community, if they did not bring the children back to Tibet. Government officials stated that all Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) officers are members of the Communist Party and that Party members are required to be atheists. However, some lower level RAB officials practice Buddhism.

Repression of religious freedom reached severe levels in Tibet in the summer of 2000. Communist Party officials and government workers (including such groups as teachers and medical workers) were forbidden to visit religious sites or practice religion at home. In some areas, private citizens were not permitted to change prayer flags on their homes, burn incense, participate in religious activities during the Tibetan New Year (Losar), or make the traditional "lingkor" (pilgrimage circuit around the sacred sites of Lhasa). These measures no longer were enforced strictly by the end of 2000. In February 2002, New Year celebrations were more open than those of the previous 2 years. Lhasa's major monasteries held large, active prayer festivals attended by pilgrims and Lhasa residents, although security reportedly was tight. The Sagadawa Festival in May 2002 was marked by similar lively celebrations and participation by pilgrims and city dwellers alike. However, in the past few years Tibetans have been forbidden to celebrate actively the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6.

Travel restrictions were reported during the period covered by this report. Restrictions on the issuance of passports increased in early 2002. There were many reports of increased difficulty in obtaining internal travel permits for pilgrimages, and many travelers were unable to travel to the holy site of Mt. Kailash during 2001. Pilgrimages to Mt. Kailash have particular religious significance during 2002, and restric-

tions on internal travel permits, at least to Mt. Kailash, appear to have eased during the spring of 2002. 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, making it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations. Religious practice faced ongoing restrictions in 2001, but overall these restrictions were less harshly enforced than during the previous year. However, the 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 29 monks and nuns have died while in detention since 1987, 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 while in detention or soon after release. The TIN reported that a young monk, Kelsang Gyatso, died in August 2001 after a brief period of detention in Lhasa. Kelsang Gyatso was reportedly detained with a group of monks from Qinghai Province, who were attempting to travel to India via Nepal. Ngawang Lochoe (also known as Dondrub Drolma), a 28-year-old nun at Sandrup Dolma Lhakang temple, reportedly died in February 2001 after serving 9 years of a 10-year sentence for participating in "counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement". She died the same day that she was moved to a hospital from Drapchi Prison, reportedly from respiratory and heart failure.

According to statistics from the TIN, as many as 120 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns were detained in China, a majority of whom were imprisoned in the TAR. In May 2002, the Deputy Director of the TAR Prison Administration Bureau stated that there were approximately 110 prisoners in the TAR incarcerated for "endangering state security." The majority of these persons are monks and nuns. Five of these prisoners subsequently were released. 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 reportedly were beaten severely. Nun Ngawang Sangdrol is reported to suffer from the long-term effects of repeated severe beatings. Her prison sentence was extended for a third time in 1998 to a total of 28 years for taking part in demonstrations in prison. According to credible reports, her health is extremely poor and deteriorating. Government officials assert that she is in good health. Nun Phuntsog Nyidrol, who was sentenced in 1989 for counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement, also continues to be in poor health. According to credible reports, she has been beaten severely during her incarceration in Drapchi prison. In 2001 her sentence was reduced by 1 year, and her release date is set for March 2005.

The Government continued to control the movements of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama recognized in 1995 as the 11th Panchen Lama (when he was 6 years old), along with his family. Government officials have claimed that the boy is under government supervision for his own protection and that he attends classes in Tibet as a "normal schoolboy." The actual location of Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family remains unknown. All requests from the international community for access to the boy to confirm his whereabouts and his well being have been refused. 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.

Chadrel Rinpoche, the lama who was accused by the Government of betraying state secrets while helping the Dalai Lama choose the incarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, was released from prison in January 2002, according to officials. While his 6-year sentence was expected to expire in May 2001, officials maintain that his January 2002 release was in accordance with his formal sentence. There are reports that Chadrel Rinpoche is being held under house arrest near Shigatse, but officials have not confirmed his whereabouts. They have stated that Chadrel Rinpoche is studying scriptures in seclusion. Nun Ngawang Choezom was released from prison on June 21, 2002, 9 months before the end of her sentence. She was detained in 1992 for advocating a free Tibet and sentenced to 5 years in prison, but in 1993 her sentence was extended to 11 years after a group of nuns, including Ngawang Choezom, secretly recorded songs about Tibetan independence. After prison protests in 1998, Ngawang Choezom reportedly was beaten severely and placed in solitary confinement. In addition, during the period covered by this report, three other nuns,

Tenzin Thubten, Ngawang Choekji, and Gyaltsen Drolkar, were released prior to the expiration of their sentences.

Following the December 1999 flight of the Karmapa, Urgyen Trinley Dorje, to India, authorities restricted access to the Tsurphu Monastery, the seat of the Karmapa, and reportedly increased "patriotic education" activities there. 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 Tsurpu 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.

Since Falun Gong was banned in July 1999, there have been reports of detentions of Falun Gong practitioners in Tibet. The number of practicing Falun Gong practitioners in Tibet is believed to be small.

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

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, some ethnic Tibetan converts reportedly are subject to social pressure and some reportedly have been disinherited by Buddhist family members.

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. On numerous occasions, 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. U.S. diplomatic personnel stationed in the country also regularly traveled to Tibet to monitor conditions, including the status of religious freedom. 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.

In July 2001, the Government agreed to resume the official U.S.China bilateral human rights dialog, which had been suspended since 1999. The dialog was held in October 2001 and religious freedom was an agenda item.

In October 2001, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

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. After its July 1, 1997 reversion to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong retained autonomy through its designation as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) 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 main area of concern during the period covered by this report was the authorities' approach to adherents of the spiritual movement Falun Gong, who were unable to secure permission to rent a public facility for an annual international conference, were not allowed to demonstrate directly in

front of the entrance to the Central People's Government Liaison Office, and had banners confiscated on one occasion.

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

The HKSAR 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 4 percent of the population are Protestant, 3 percent are Roman Catholic, and 1 percent are Muslim. There also are small numbers of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews. Representatives of the spiritual movement Falun Gong state that their practitioners number approximately 500, although HKSAR government officials claim that the number is lower.

There are 1,300 Protestant congregations representing 50 denominations. The largest Protestant denomination is the Baptist Church, followed by the Lutheran Church. Other major denominations include Seventh-Day Adventists, Anglicans, Christian and Missionary Alliance groups, the Church of Christ in China, Methodists, Pentecostals, 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 310 priests, 60 monks, and 525 nuns with traditional links to the Pope. More than 278,000 children are enrolled in 314 Catholic schools and kindergartens. The Assistant Secretary General of the Federation of Asian Bishops' conference has his office in the HKSAR. Protestant churches run 3 colleges and more than 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. Numerous foreign missionary groups operate in and out of the HKSAR.

There has been marked growth in the number of independent churches since the 1970's.

A wide range of faiths is represented in the HKSAR Government, the judiciary, and the civil service. A large number of influential non-Christians receive a Christian education.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law, the HKSAR's mini-constitution, provides for freedom of religion, the Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination by the HKSAR Government, and the HKSAR Government generally respects these provisions in practice. The HKSAR Government at all levels generally protects religious freedom in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. Although a part of the PRC since July 1, 1997, the HKSAR maintains autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the "one country, two systems" concept that defines the HKSAR's relationship to the mainland. The HKSAR Government does not recognize a state religion, and a wide range of faiths is represented in the HKSAR Government, the judiciary, and the civil service.

Religious groups are not required to register with the HKSAR Government and are exempted specifically from the Societies Ordinance, which requires the registration of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). Catholics in the HKSAR 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 Central People's Government policies. However, in March 2002, 16 Falun Gong practitioners were arrested and later convicted of obstruction of public space and minor assault outside the Central People's Government Liaison Office. The case was pending appeal at the end of the period covered by this report. Falun Gong practitioners held an international conference in a government-owned facility in January 2001, held a number of public protests during President Jiang Zemin's visit in May 2001, and regularly organized

public demonstration outside PRC offices. In addition, in July 2000, a publisher of Falun Gong publications reserved prominent space at the annual Hong Kong International Book Fair, but decided to leave the space vacant. Other qigong groups, including Zhong Gong (which was banned in the mainland in late 1999), Xiang Gong, and Yan Xin Qigong, also are registered and practice freely in the HKSAR. The Taiwan-based Guan Yin Method, another group listed as an "evil cult" by the Central People's Government, is registered legally and practices freely in the HKSAR as well.

The Home Affairs Bureau is responsible for religion-related policy, but functions as a liaison between religious groups and the HKSAR Government. If a religious group wishes 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. The HKSAR Government has taken no action on draft educational reforms (which would have affected all schools, including religiously sponsored schools) that were proposed more than 2 years ago.

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 the HKSAR's Chief Executive and a number of Legislative Council members.

The HKSAR 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 HKSAR Government on social welfare projects. For example, the HKSAR Government often funds the operating costs of schools and hospitals built by religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Under the Basic Law the Central People's Government does not govern religious practices in the HKSAR, mainland Government leaders, the Central People's Government's official representatives in the HKSAR, and the two mainland-owned newspapers in the HKSAR have criticized some HKSAR religious and spiritual groups and individuals. In December 2000 in Macau, Central People's Government President Jiang Zemin stated that the HKSAR Government should not allow anyone to stage any activities in Macau against the Central People's Government or to split the country in any way; in his speech he made it clear that his comments applied equally to both Hong Kong and Macau.

One Basic Law provision calls for ties between HKSAR religious organizations and their mainland counterparts to be based on "non-subordination, noninterference, and mutual respect." HKSAR religious leaders have noted that this provision could be used to limit such ties. In April 2000, central authorities reportedly accused a HKSAR religious leader of violating this noninterference clause by criticizing Central People's Government religious policies; since then, that leader has not sought permission from Central People's Government authorities to visit the mainland. However, the traditional ties of the HKSAR Catholic Church to the Vatican have not precluded its contacts with the official Catholic Church on the mainland. In September 2000, HKSAR-based Central People's Government officials urged HKSAR'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 HKSAR Catholic Church did not alter its extensive plans to mark the occasion.

Although the spiritual group Falun Gong remains free to practice, organize, and conduct public demonstrations, concern increased about pressure from Central People's Government authorities and their supporters to limit the group's activities during the period covered by this report. After intense expressions of local and international concern, the HKSAR Government announced in July 2001 that it had no plans to pursue anti-cult legislation. The number of Falun Gong practitioners in the HKSAR is reported to have dropped from approximately 1,000 to about 500 since the crackdown on the mainland began in mid-1999, although HKSAR government officials claim that the number is lower for both periods. After some HKSAR publishing houses declined to publish Falun Gong materials, the Falun Gong shifted the majority of its publishing to companies based elsewhere. One bookstore owned by a Falun Gong practitioner carried Falun Gong books. Some other bookstores refused to carry Falun Gong books, although this could be due to lack of demand. In December 2000, four newspapers printed Falun Gong advertisements protesting Central People's Government repression of its members. Three other newspapers, however, refused to print the advertisement; one based its refusal on the grounds that the advertisement was "defamatory of the Central People's Government," and under HKSAR law there are legal penalties for defamatory material. Following intense

criticism of the HKSAR Government by pro-mainland organizations for allowing the Falun Gong to hold its annual conference in an HKSAR Government-run facility in January 2001, Falun Gong organizers have not been able to host a followup conference. The group's applications to rent both government administered and privately owned facilities repeatedly have been turned down.

Especially during the period prior to President Jiang Zemin's visit in May 2001, senior HKSAR officials made remarks critical of the Falun Gong, even stating that the group was an "evil cult," but senior leaders did not repeat such comments during the period covered by this report. Falun Gong practitioners have been able to demonstrate and to gain publicity for their movement during the period covered by this report.

In 2001, the HKSAR Government barred entry into Hong Kong of approximately 100 Falun Gong practitioners, most of whom were seeking to enter the HKSAR from the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Taiwan. The HKSAR Government cited undefined "security reasons" for entry bans of Falun Gong practitioners and denied that its actions were based on the individuals' religious beliefs or membership in any particular organization. Nonetheless, several hundred local and foreign resident-Falun Gong practitioners were allowed to demonstrate freely on numerous occasions and at numerous venues during President Jiang's May 2001 visit.

In March 2002, police arrested 16 Falun Gong practitioners, including 4 Swiss citizens, who were demonstrating in front of the Liaison Office; the criminal trial of the practitioners on charges of obstruction and minor assault began in June 2002 and had not concluded by the end of the period covered by this report. According to press reports, in June 2002, the HKSAR Government refused entry to approximately 100 Falun Gong practitioners who had come from Asia and Europe to join local demonstrations during celebrations to commemorate the HKSAR's return to mainland sovereignty. In June 2002 the HKSAR government barred an American Falun Gong practitioner from entering Hong Kong for "security" reasons. In November 2001, police confiscated Falun Gong protesters' placards and banners on the grounds of public obstruction. Although the protesters were warned of additional confiscation if they persisted, the protests continued through the end of the year with no further police action.

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 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 HKSAR 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 HKSAR 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 the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) with a high degree of autonomy. Both the Basic Law (mini constitution) and the Religious Freedom Ordinance provide for freedom of religion and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious practice, and the MSAR 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, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. However, 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 at times photographed and took some practitioners to the police station to check their identification 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. Officers at the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong also are responsible for Macau, and meet regularly with Macau religious leaders.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Macau 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, 13.9 percent were "other" (followers of a combination of Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian beliefs), 6.7 percent were Roman Catholic, and 1.7 percent were Protestant. The number of active Falun Gong practitioners declined from approximately 100 persons to approximately 20 after the movement was banned in mainland China in July 1999.

Members of the Government, the judiciary, and the civil service belong to a wide range of faiths.

Missionaries are active in the MSAR, and represent a wide range of faiths; the majority are Catholic.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

On December 20, 1999, Macau reverted from Portuguese to Chinese sovereignty and became the Macau Special Administrative region of the PRC. The Basic Law—the mini-constitution—provides for freedom of conscience, freedom of religious belief, freedom to preach, and freedom to conduct and participate in religious activities. The Freedom of Religion Ordinance, which remained in effect 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 MSAR Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, there was at least one incident of police detention of Falun Gong demonstrators.

There is no state religion.

The Religious Freedom Ordinance requires religious organizations to register with the MSAR'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 the MSAR. 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 in the MSAR recognizes the Pope as the head of the Church. In April 2001, the Holy See appointed a Coadjutor Bishop for the MSAR diocese. Editorials in the local Catholic newspaper cited the appointment as an example of the MSAR 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 lawyer advised them that their group's application for registration would not be approved, as the Falun Gong was banned in mainland China in July 1999. The Identification Services Office has not issued any instructions regarding the Falun Gong, and senior MSAR 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, once available for sale in two stores, were removed from shelves by store management after Falun Gong was banned on the mainland. However, the Government has taken no action to limit the availability of such materials.

During the period covered by this report, Falun Gong practitioners continued their daily exercises in public parks; however, in September 2001, one group that had demonstrated outside the Central People's Government Liaison Office was photographed by the police and taken to a nearby police station. The group had demonstrated in support of fellow Falun Gong members on the mainland. The police questioned members of the group and checked their identification; no one was charged.

During the second anniversary celebration of the MSAR's handover, in December 2001, there were no reports of any police harassment of local Falun Gong members. PRC officials did not attend the event, unlike the previous year's celebration, during which PRC President Jiang Zemin's visit to the MSAR was marked by the barring of entry to the MSAR of dozens of foreign Falun Gong practitioners and democracy activists and the detention of 20 practitioners at a park near the celebration. The authorities claimed that the entry of the foreign practitioners and activists into the MSAR in December 2000 was barred on the basis that nonresident foreigners do not have the right to assemble and demonstrate in the MSAR. In April 2001, a female Falun Gong practitioner from Hong Kong was barred from entering Macau despite statements by the Chief Executive that there was no political blacklist of persons from Hong Kong. The police continue to keep a list of unwelcome persons who have criminal records and persons whom they believe have criminal intentions. However, Falun Gong activists reported that they have traveled to Macau at times without interference.

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 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 MSAR Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. 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 the authorities' 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 located in the Western Pacific Ocean off the east coast of mainland China, with a total area of approximately 13,800 square miles and a population of approximately 23 million. While the authorities do not maintain separate official statistics on religious affiliation, registration statistics suggest that of the total population, approximately 5,486,000 (23.9 percent) are Buddhist; 4,546,000 (19.8 percent) are Taoist; 887,000 (3.9 percent) follow I Kuan Tao; 605,000 (2.6 percent) are Protestant; 298,000 (1.3 percent) are Roman Catholic; 260,000 (1.1 percent) follow Tien Ti Chiao (Heaven Emperor Religion); 200,000 (0.9 percent) follow Tien Te Chiao (Heaven Virtue Religion); 187,000 (0.8 percent) follow Liism; 150,000 (0.7 percent) follow Hsuan Yuan Chiao (Yellow Emperor Religion); 100,000 (0.4 percent) follow Maitraya Great Tao; 96,000 (0.4 percent) follow the Chinese Holy Religion; 53,000 (0.2 percent) are Sunni Muslim; 31,500 (0.1 percent) follow

Hai Tzu Tao (Innocent Child Religion); and 30,000 (0.1 percent) follow Tien Li Chiao (Heaven Reason Religion). In addition approximately 16,000 persons are adherents of the Baha'i Faith; 12,500 follow Confucianism; 3,200 follow the Maitraya Emperor Religion; 1,000 follow Ta I Chiao (Great Changes Religion); and 1,000 are adherents of the Mahikari Religion. The non-Catholic Christian denominations include: Presbyterians, True Jesus, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Baptists, Lutherans, SeventhDay Adventists, Episcopalians, and Jehovah's Witnesses. There also are a small number of adherents of Judaism. More than 70 percent of the indigenous population (Aborigines) 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 participate in some form of organized religious practice. Almost 14 percent of the population are believed to be atheist.

In addition to practicing another religion, many persons also follow a collection of beliefs that are deeply ingrained in Chinese culture, and that 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. Such folk religion may overlap with an individual's belief in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, or other traditional Chinese religions. There also may be an overlap between practitioners of such religions as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, and practitioners of Falun Gong, whose numbers have grown rapidly in recent years to as many as 100,000. Observers have estimated that as much as 80 percent of the population believes in some form of traditional folk religion.

Religious beliefs cross political and geographical lines. Members of the political leadership practice various faiths. Officials from across the political spectrum were among the thousands of persons who visited an exhibition of a sacred Buddhist relic on loan from the Chinese Buddhist Association in Beijing, which was on tour in Taiwan from February to March 2002 under the auspices of a Buddhist temple in Foguangshan, Kaosiung County. However, some pro-independence elements criticized the loan of the relic by the Beijing association as politically motivated.

Foreign missionary groups are active in Taiwan, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and 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 strive to protect this right in full, and do not tolerate its abuse, either by the authorities or private actors. There is no state religion.

Although registration is not mandatory, 19 religious organizations have registered with the Ministry of the Interior. 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; however, there were no reports that the authorities sought to deny registration to new religions during the period covered by this report.

Religious instruction is not permitted at the elementary, middle, or high school levels in public or private schools that 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 accredited formally by the Ministry of Education, 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.

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 free 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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

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 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 discusses religious freedom issues with the authorities in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The American Institute is in frequent contact with representatives of human rights organizations and occasionally meets with leaders of various religious communities.

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 more than 300 islands, 100 of which are inhabited; most of the population is concentrated on the main island of Viti Levu. The country's total 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 3 major religions, there are 449,482 Christians, 264,173 Hindus, and 54,323 Muslims. The largest Christian denomination is the Methodist Church, which claims 218,000 members. Other Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church 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. There also are a small number of nondenominational Christian sects.

Religion runs largely along ethnic lines. The population is split largely between two main ethnic groups: Indigenous Fijians who constitute approximately 51 percent; and Indo-Fijians, who constitute 44 percent. Most Indo-Fijians practice Hinduism; most indigenous Fijians follow Christianity. Other ethnic communities include Chinese and European persons. Approximately 60 percent of the Chinese community practice Christianity and 40 percent practice Confucianism or some form of ancestor worship. The European community is predominantly Christian.

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 numerous Christian missionary organizations that are nationally and regionally active in social welfare, health, and education. Many major Christian denominations, 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 strives to protect this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse. Citizens have the right, either individually or collectively, both in public and private, to manifest their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, or teaching. 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 free 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 were not 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 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 relations generally are cordial between the two largest religious communities, Christian and Hindu, there were two incidents of vandalism directed against Hindu places of worship, in May and June 2001. In addition, in August 2001, a Catholic church was desecrated. The Hindu religious group Sanatan indicated that it believes that the attacks against its places of worship were isolated incidents and not indicative of greater intolerance. The perpetrators of all three acts of vandalism never have been identified, and the police treated them as isolated incidents.

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."

Muslim religious leaders continued to press for the establishment of separate Islamic courts for their minority community; however, there were no new developments on the issue 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. 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 "all persons the right to worship according to his or her own religion or belief," and states that "the nation is based upon belief in

one supreme God" and the Government generally respects these provisions; however, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity and on unrecognized religions. The Government has given official recognition in the form of representation at the Ministry of Religious Affairs to five major faiths—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism. In January 2000, former President Abdurrahman Wahid lifted the ban on the practice of Confucianism that had existed since 1967 and in May 2000 a decree banning the Baha'i Faith and the Rosicrucians was lifted. In June 2001, the Government lifted its ban on the Jehovah's Witnesses. While only the five above-mentioned religions are officially recognized, 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. There is widespread tension between Muslims and Christians that has erupted into localized violent conflicts in recent years. A small minority of extremists, primarily from outside the conflict areas, have exploited and exacerbated the violence. Ongoing conflicts between Muslims and Christians resulted in the deaths of at least 125 persons and the displacement of 390,000 others during the period covered by this report. During late 2001, the Government worked to end Muslim-Christian violence in Central Sulawesi and the Moluccas by dispatching thousands of soldiers and police officers to the area and by brokering peace agreements between the two communities in December 2001 and February 2002. The agreements reduced but did not end the violence. Among other issues, economic factors have contributed to the conflicts, which increasingly have been expressed in religious terms. In both Central Sulawesi and the Moluccas, lax law enforcement and the halting of efforts to disarm Muslim fighters has allowed violence to continue despite the new peace agreements. The Government has been criticized over the conduct of the military in conflict areas. Some military units were accused of siding with their coreligionists, both Muslim and Christian, and supporting combatants, either directly or indirectly. 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.

Religiously motivated violence elsewhere also included threats and occasional attacks by Muslims on entertainment establishments such as restaurants, bars, billiard clubs, and nightclubs by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and other radical groups that deemed such establishments to be immoral. These threats and attacks occurred mainly in Jakarta, on the island of Java. The Government took no action against the perpetrators of such attacks and some observers linked the police to the FPI. In Jakarta Surabaya, and other cities local leaders ordered some nightspots to close during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. However, enforcement of the orders was lax, and many such businesses remained open.

In a few municipalities, groups attempted to force Muslim women to cover their heads with scarves per conservative Muslim custom. As part of the debate over constitutional reform, some political parties have advocated the adoption of Islamic law (Shari'a). However, the country's largest Muslim organizations remain opposed to the idea, as are secular political parties, which hold a majority in Parliament. As part of the Special Autonomy Law, the Government allowed local lawmakers to introduce Shari'a in Aceh; however, no legislation was passed as of the end of the period covered by this report.

In the easternmost province of Papua (formerly Irian Jaya), local residents expressed concern over the arrival of the Islamic extremist group Laskar Jihad, which has active organizations in at least half of the province's 14 districts. In the Papuan city of Sorong, local residents were vocal in their opposition to the group, which was held responsible for terrorizing and killing Christians in the Moluccas and Sulawesi.

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. Government actively engaged with religious leaders and with the Ministry of Religion, and facilitated a number of interfaith conferences and seminars. These activities involved scholars and university students, and emphasized the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in a pluralistic society.

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 206 million according to the 2000 census. The island of Java is home to half of the population. The latest available data, from 1990, indicate that 87 percent of the population were Muslim, 6.0 percent were Protestant, 3.6 percent

were Catholic, 1.8 percent were Hindu, 1.0 percent were Buddhist, and 0.6 percent were "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 faiths such 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 (partly because some official identity documents require a religion to be listed); however, their numbers are believed to be minuscule.

Muslims are the majority population (at least 51 percent or more) in most regions of Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, West Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, and North Maluku. Muslims are distinct minorities only in Papua, Bali, East Nusa Tenggara, and parts of North Sumatra and North Sulawesi. Most Muslims are Sunni, although there are adherents of the Shi'a, Amadhiyah, Sufi, and other branches of Islam. The mainstream Muslim community roughly is divided into two groups: urban "modernists" who closely adhere to scriptural orthodox theology while embracing modern learning and modern concepts; and rural, predominantly Javanese "traditionalists" who are led by charismatic religious scholars and who often are organized around Islamic boarding schools. The "modernists" are represented by the 35 million strong Muhammadiyah social organization, which has branches throughout the country. The "traditionalists" are represented by the 40 million strong Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) social organization, which is concentrated in Java.

There also are small numbers of messianic Islamic groups, including the Malaysian-affiliated Darul Arqam and the Indonesian Jamaah Salamulla (or Salamulla Congregation). The latter, led by a woman who claims to have been appointed by the Angel Gabriel, is thought to have approximately 100 members. Amadhiyah followers claim that their leader Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was an Indian Muslim prophet and that anyone can become a prophet. The Amadhiyahs have 242 branches spread throughout much of the country; there are 8 Amadhiyah mosques in Jakarta. There also are approximately 50 Shi'a groups in the country. Another messianic group, Negara Islam Indonesia (NII), increased its informal recruitment and is campaigning to turn the country into an Islamic state. The NII traces its origins to an armed movement that was defeated by the military in the 1960s.

Most Christians reside in the eastern part of the country. Roman Catholicism is predominant in much of East Nusa Tenggara province and in southeast Maluku province, while Protestantism is predominant in the central part of Maluku province and in North Maluku and in North Sulawesi provinces. In Papua Protestants predominate in the north, and Catholics in the south—this situation is the result of a Dutch colonial policy, continued by the Indonesian Government after independence, of dividing the territory between foreign Catholic and Protestant missionaries. Other significant Christian populations are located in North Sumatra, the seat of the Batak Protestant Church. There also are significant Christian populations in West Kalimantan (mostly Catholic) and Central Kalimantan (mostly Protestant) and on Java. Many urban ethnic Chinese citizens adhere to Christian faiths or combine Christianity with Buddhism or Confucianism.

Representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses state that there are approximately 16,500 adherents in the country, not including children, and that an equal number are actively studying the religion. There are no independent estimates available.

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 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 has 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. Regardless of its intent, the economic consequences of the transmigration policy contributed to the current religious conflicts in Papua, the Moluccas and Sulawesi.

Most Hindus live in Bali, where they account for 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), the city of Medan (North Sumatra), South and Central Sulawesi, and Lombok (West Nusatenggara). Some of these Hin-

dus left Bali for these areas as part of the government's transmigration program. The Hindu Association, Pansada Hindu Dharma (PHDI), estimates that Medan is home to approximately 4,000 ethnic Chinese Hindus. 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.

Among the country's Buddhists, an estimated 70 percent practice the Mahayana school. Theravada followers account for another 20 percent, with the remaining adherents belonging to the Tantrayana, Tridharma, Kasogatan, Nichiren, and Maitreya schools. According to the Indonesian Youth Buddhist Council (MBI), 40 percent of the country's Buddhists are ethnic Chinese. The MBI was part of the Indonesian Great Sangha Conference (KASI). Another and somewhat older Buddhist organization active nationally is the Indonesian Buddhist Council (WALUBI), which has affiliates from all of the schools. Relations between the WALUBI and the KASI deteriorated during the period covered by this report. The WALUBI members were angered by the cancellation of a presidential visit, which is widely believed to have been orchestrated by the KASI, to the Borobudur temple in Yogyakarta, Central Java during the May 2002 Waisak festival.

The number of adherents of Confucianism in the country is unclear. The national census, carried out every 5 years, no longer enables respondents to identify themselves as Confucian. But in 1976-1977, the last year in which the category was included, 0.7 percent of the population was self-identified as Confucian, according to the Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia (MATAKIN). Since that census the proportion of practicing Confucians probably has increased slightly, because the Government's decision to lift restrictions on Confucianism has made it easier to practice Confucianism. The MATAKIN estimates that 95 percent of the country's Confucians are ethnic Chinese, with the balance being mostly indigenous Javanese. 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 Christianity. Before the ban on Confucianism was lifted in 2000, Confucian temples usually were located inside Buddhist temples.

Animism and other types of traditional belief systems, generically termed "Aliran Kepercayaan," still are practiced in Java, Kalimantan, and Papua. Many of those who practice Kepercayaan describe it as more of a meditation-based spiritual path than a religion. Many animists combine their beliefs with one of the Government-recognized religions.

There are several dozen Jews in Surabaya, East Java, where the nation's only synagogue is located. A member of that congregation stated that many of its members are senior citizens, but due to natural attrition, the size of the congregation is declining. There also is a small Jewish community in Jakarta.

Falun Gong estimates that it has 2,000 to 3,000 followers in the country. Representatives of the group state that 25 percent of the group's members are of Chinese descent. The country's largest Falun Gong gatherings reportedly occur in Bali.

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 Papua and Kalimantan.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for "all persons the right to worship according to his or her own religion or belief," and states that "the nation is based upon belief in one supreme God" and the Government generally respects these provisions; however, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity and on unrecognized religions.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs extends official status to only five faiths—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Religious organizations other than the five recognized faiths are able to register with the Government, but only with the State Ministry for Culture and Tourism, and only as social organizations. This results in restrictions on certain types of religious activities and on religions with fewer domestic followers. While the Government had in recent years taken steps to normalize the status of Confucians and Jehovah's Witnesses, it failed to accord them and members of other less-represented faiths equal treatment, in such areas as civil registration. Religions that are not permitted to register are precluded

from renting venues to hold services. Any religion that cannot register is forced to find alternative means to practice their faith.

The Government permits the practice of the indigenous belief system of Kepercayaan, but only as a cultural manifestation, and not as a religion; followers of "Aliran Kepercayaan" must register with the Ministry of Education's Department of National Education. Some religious minorities—specifically those of the Baha'i Faith and the Rosicrucians—were allowed to operate openly, following a May 2000 decree that lifted a ban on their activities. Other minority faiths such as Zoroastrianism, Shintoism and Taoism legally also are permitted.

Although Islam is the religion of the vast majority of the population, the country is not an Islamic state. Over the past 50 years, many fundamentalist Islamic groups sporadically have sought to establish an Islamic state, but the country's mainstream Muslim community, including influential organizations such as the Muhammadiyah and the NU, 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 Shari'a. During the Suharto regime, advocacy of an Islamic state was forbidden. With the loosening of restrictions on freedom of speech and religion that followed the fall of Suharto in May 1998, proponents of the "Jakarta Charter" have resumed their advocacy efforts. The secular political parties and appointed police, military, and functional representatives, who together hold a majority of the seats in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), (which has the power to change the Constitution), oppose proposals to amend the Constitution to include Shari'a. The Muhammadiyah, the NU and many prominent Muslim clerics also oppose such a change.

Shari'a was a source of intense national debate and concern during the period covered by this report. During 2001 Parliament enacted legislation that granted Aceh, a Muslim province on the northwestern tip of Sumatra, Special Autonomy Status. As part of this status, authority for the province to implement Shari'a was announced on January 1, 2002. Permission for Aceh's regional legislature to apply Shari'a in the province was granted, as long as the application of Shari'a did not violate national law. Although the central Government spoke of having "granted" Islamic law to Aceh, there was disagreement among legal scholars over the legality of Shari'a in Aceh. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Acehnese parliament did not pass the necessary legislation for Shari'a to be implemented. If the enabling legislation is passed, it would allow Aceh to establish a court system based on Shari'a. Individuals sentenced under Shari'a in Aceh will have the right of appeal to the Supreme Court. The new law also will allow the Acehnese to restrict the freedom to choose one's religion; for example, Muslims would be forbidden to convert. The Government also has assured the public that Shari'a law would not apply to non-Muslims in Aceh, but debate in the People's Representative Assembly (DPR) continues over whether Shari'a 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 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 during the period covered by this report. 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. 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 declaration was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Provincial legislatures in Banten (Java), Gorontolo (Sulawesi), Maluku, North Maluku, Riau (Sumatra), and South Kalimantan provinces also were considering implementation of Shari'a.

The Government requires that official religions comply with a number of Ministry of Religious Affairs and other ministerial directives in their registration and activities. 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).

The law allows conversion between faiths, and such conversions do occur, although some converts to minority religions feel compelled not to publicize the event for family and social reasons. However, there is a legal requirement to adhere to the official state ideology, Pancasila, and because its first tenet is belief in one supreme God, atheism is forbidden.

Religious instruction is required for students in elementary and secondary public schools. In theory students are free to choose from five types of classes, representing the five recognized faiths—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism and Hinduism. However, in practice few schools offer classes in all of the officially recognized faiths, and in many schools only one class was offered. Consequently, a Muslim boy in a Catholic-majority region, for example, might be unable to avoid receiving religious instruction in Catholicism at school and vice versa. Although school enrollment is not a point of contention, the fact that interdenominational courses are not always available, make some members of minority religions resent having to subject their children to what they call "indoctrination."

There are 13 political parties directly or partially affiliated with Islam: the United Development Party (PPP); the Star and Crescent Party (PBB); the Justice Party (PK); the Indonesian Muslim Awakening Party (KAMI); the Islamic Members' Party (PUI); the People's Development Party (PKU); the Masyumi Islamic Political Party (PPIM); the New Masyumi Party (Masyumi Baru); the United Islamic Party (PSII 1905); the Nahdlatul Members Party (PNU); the Unity Party (PP); the Democratic Islamic Party (PID), and the National United Solidarity Party (PSUN). Former leaders of the Muhammadiyah and the NU led nationalist parties, the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the National Awakening Party (PKB), which attempted to draw heavily on grass-roots support from their former Islamic social organizations.

The country has three Christian parties: the National Indonesian Christian Party (KRISNA); the Catholic Democratic Party (PKD); and the Democratic People's Devotion Party (PDKB). There is only one Buddhist party: the Indonesian Buddhist Party (Partai Budis Indonesia, or PARBUDI). Members of the Buddhist group KASI reportedly plan to form a party called the Buddhist Democratic Party of Indonesia (Partai Buddha Demokrat Indonesia). In the 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.

Within the armed forces, religious facilities and programs are provided at all major housing complexes for members of the five officially recognized religions. These facilities and programs were overseen by the Center for Mental Development. Each branch of the armed forces had an Agency for Mental Development chaired by a Chief of Spiritual Development. 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 Suharto 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. Organized services and prayer meetings are available for members of each recognized religion. Although every military housing complex was required to provide a mosque, a Catholic Church, a Protestant Church, and worship centers for Buddhists and Hindus, smaller compounds rarely offered facilities for all five recognized religions, in part because no adherents to the smaller faiths were represented at every facility.

Religious groups and social organizations must obtain permits to hold religious concerts or other public events. Permits usually are granted in an unbiased manner, unless there is concern that the activity could anger members of another faith who live in the area.

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 are many Christian programs, including ones featuring televangelists, as well as programs by and for Buddhists and Hindus.

Some 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 the Prophet (October 4); Idul Fitri (December 6 and 7); Idul Adah (February 23); the Muslim New Year (March 15); and the Prophet's Birthday (May 25). Nationally celebrated Christian holidays were: Christmas Day (December 25); Good Friday (March 29), and the Ascension of Christ (May 9). Two other national holidays were the Hindu holiday Nyepi (March 25) and the Buddhist holiday Waisak (May 29). The Chinese New Year (February 25), celebrated by Confucians, was decreed a permanent national holiday, beginning in 2003.

A number of government officials, and prominent religious and political leaders, were involved in, or supported, a number of interfaith groups, including the Society

for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA), the Indonesian Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI); 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 Forum for Peace (FID).

The Government has stated that improvements in religious freedom and interfaith dialog should be promoted. 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 function of religious institutions to overcome the difficulties of social transition and to strengthen inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, certain policies, laws, and official actions restricted religious freedom, and the police and military occasionally tolerated discrimination against and abuse of religious groups by private actors.

Because the first tenet of the country's national doctrine, Pancasila, is the belief in one supreme God, atheism is prohibited; however, there were no reports of the repression of atheists.

On June 1, 2001, the Ministry of Justice revoked the decision by the Attorney General which put a ban on Jehovah's Witnesses practicing their faith. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Trinitarian Christians instigated the government bans and that perhaps some mainstream Christian leaders 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.

Certain messianic Islamic groups faced restrictions on their religious freedom during the period covered by this report. An official ban on the activities of the groups Jamaah Salamullah, Ahmadiyah, and Darul Arqam remained in effect, based on a 1994 "fatwa" edict, (a religious decree), by the National Ulemas Council (MUI). However, the Government still has not enforced the ban, enabling the groups to stay in operation through the formation of companies that distribute "halal" goods. There have been reports in the past that the authorities monitored Islamic groups considered to be deviating from orthodox tenets; in some cases closely. It is not known whether such monitoring occurred during the period covered by this report. In May 2001, a mob vandalized the Jamaah Salamulla 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 because they were disturbing the neighborhood.

The Government continued to restrict the construction and expansion of houses of worship, and maintained an ostensible ban on the use of private homes for worship unless the community approved and a regional office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs provided a license. Some Protestants complained that community approval was difficult to obtain and alleged that in some areas, Muslim authorities were systematically trying to shut them out. A government decree has been used to prohibit the construction and expansion of churches and to justify the closure of churches in predominantly Muslim areas. Although the regulations implemented under the decree apply to all recognized religions, minority groups—especially Protestant—claim that the law is enforced only on religious minorities, and that minority faiths 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 they assert 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, in 2001 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. During the period covered by the report a church in West Jakarta was closed and was ordered to move by the Governor, who stated 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. 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. Meanwhile, some Muslims expressed concern about evangelization in traditionally Muslim areas and questioned the need for separate churches for different denominations.

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 is to 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, the Central Sulawesi branch of the 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.

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. A joint decree issued by the Ministries of Religion and Home Affairs in 1979 remained in effect. It prohibits members of one religion from trying to convert members of other faiths, including through bribes, persuasion, or distribution of religious materials. Doorto-door proselytizing also remained prohibited. However, the country's laws allow for 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.

Foreign religious organizations must obtain permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, and financial) to religious groups in the country. Although this requirement is generally not enforced, some Christian groups state that it is applied more frequently to minority groups, including Christians, and that the requirement rarely is applied to mainstream Muslim groups.

Foreign missionaries are required to obtain work visas, which some described as difficult to obtain or extend. Foreign missionaries who obtained visas were able to work relatively unimpeded although there have been restrictions imposed in conflict areas. However, to obtain permission for a visa the Government requires applicants to submit: a letter from the applicant's 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 skill that a citizen cannot offer; a letter of approval from the Ministry's provincial director; a letter of support from the Director General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs who handles matters concerning the applicant's religion; a letter from the receiving religious institution, confirming that the applicant will work no more than 2 years in the country before he/she will be replaced by a local citizen who will obtain training in the same skill; statistical information on the number of followers of the religion in the community; permission from regional security authorities for those who wish to extend their Temporary Stay Permission Card; and written approval from a Provincial or District Ministry of Religion Office, after the office consults with local government authorities. However, many missionaries work without such visas.

There are no restrictions on the publication of religious materials and religious literature may be printed and religious symbols may be used. However, the Government bans the dissemination of these materials to persons of other faiths. 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.

Citizens must indicate their religion on the national identification cards (KTPs). It is obligatory to list a religion to receive a KTP, and failure to list a religion can make it impossible to obtain the identity card that is required for employment. The Civil Registration Office routinely refused to give members of minority religions a KTP that showed their religion. Some Jews ended up listing Islam as their religion, and some Confucians resorted to identifying themselves as Buddhists. Some followers of minority religions were denied KTPs on the basis of their religion, and

subsequently encountered difficulty finding work. Others, including some of the Kepercayaan faith, were issued KTPs with only a dash in the space for religion. According to advocates this sometimes made the holders of such cards less attractive as job applicants, because employers would look upon their identification card with suspicion. Members of minority religions who, in conflict areas, are stopped at civilian "checkpoints" and are asked to produce identification, face some danger due to the religious notation on their identity cards. If a person's KTP shows that the bearer adheres to a faith that is out of favor with the local population, there is a risk of violence at such checkpoints.

Several groups urged the Government to omit the category of religion from KTPs, including the Buddhist group the KASI and the PMII, an Islamic student movement within the NU. However, little if any progress was made by these groups during the period covered by this report. Activists noted bureaucratic resistance to change, and stated that the Muslim majority saw no need to lift the requirement. The Minister of Religious Affairs was quoted as saying that listing a person's religion on national identity cards is necessary so that if a citizen dies and is not claimed by relatives, the authorities will be able to ensure appropriate treatment for the remains. A 3-day conference on civil registration was held in Jakarta in May 2002, sponsored by the GANDI, the UNICEF and other organizations.

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.

Within the armed forces, there were restrictions on religious freedom during the period covered by this report. 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, some allege that 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. However, there is little proof to support this as evidenced by the fact that there is a Christian who is currently serving as a Navy Commander, and a Christian has been overall Armed Forces Commander in the past. In addition there are Hindu generals in the Armed Forces.

Many members of minority religions stated that they were unable to register their marriages at the Civil Registration Office (Kantor Catatan Sipil) because they did not belong to one of the five officially recognized faiths. Such complaints were made by Animists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Confucians, and members of the Baha'i Faith, among others. Despite being among the officially recognized faiths, Hindus stated that they frequently had to travel long distances in order to have their marriages registered, because in many rural areas the local government could not or would not perform the registration. Men and women of different religions also had trouble marrying and officially registering their marriages. Independent observers note that it has become increasingly difficult to obtain official recognition for interfaith marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims. Religiously mixed couples first must find a religious official willing to perform a marriage ceremony (which is not an easy task, according to interfaith groups), then try to register the union with the Government. The difficulties faced by members of unrecognized religions and religiously mixed couples in registering their marriages resulted in some persons converting, sometimes superficially, in order to get married. Others who could afford to, traveled to Singapore or Hong Kong, where they wed and then registered the marriage at an Indonesian Embassy. Many of the religious communities that suffered discrimination in marriage registration also encountered difficulties in registering their children's births. Confucians had special difficulty in registering births. According to the MATAKIN, a Confucian advocacy group, births to Confucian women are recorded at the Civil Registration Office as being out of wedlock. Only the mother's name is recorded, not the father's, causing shame or embarrassment.

The law does not discriminate against any religious group in employment, education, housing, and health; however, some religious minority groups allege that there is de facto discrimination that limits their access to top government jobs and slots at public universities. Some religious minority groups also contend that promotion opportunities for non-Muslims in the military and the police decreased. Muslim groups continue to press the Government to grant employment preferences to Muslims, the majority group. Vocal segments of the Muslim community called for a form of affirmative action for "Islamic" civil servants and businessmen, which is intended to rectify the Suharto regime's preferential economic treatment of a very small minority of ethnic Chinese citizens.

In Aceh many religious leaders insisted that there were no plans to institute stricter aspects of Shari'a than are found in the hudud (strict traditional punishments for criminal or social offenses, such as the amputation of limbs or stoning). 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. Shari'a requires Muslim men and women to abide by Muslim dress codes, which include requiring women to cover their head, legs, and arms in public. However, there was no evidence that any Muslims—or non-Muslims—had been punished for dress-code violations during the period covered by this report. Shortly after the authority to implement Shari'a was announced for Aceh, police in the capital, Banda Aceh, stopped a number of women who were riding on motorbikes and not wearing head scarves. The Muslim women were given headscarves, but they were not forced to wear them. This practice did not last long. Some residents claimed that this incident was intended to attract publicity. In another incident, women's rights activists reportedly succeeded in halting a plan to create a scarf-compulsory zone for women in Banda Aceh. The original decision, announced through the media, allegedly was made by the security forces.

In other fundamentalist Islamic strongholds, attempts by local legislators and religious leaders to follow Aceh's lead so far have had little result, in part because other provinces and municipalities did not share Aceh's legislative prerogatives, and because there was organized political opposition. For example, a coalition of secular parties and women's groups prompted the provincial legislature of West Sumatra to reject a bill that would have incorporated elements of Islamic law into the civil code. Stricter Islamic legal practices were introduced informally in Cianjur and Garut, West Java, in Makassar in South Sulawesi, and in Gorontalo (formerly part of North Sulawesi). In some cases, local officials encouraged these developments; in others, they remained neutral or tacitly against it. In some other Muslim majority areas, Islamic norms were adopted. In north Maluku, for example, some towns virtually were closed for Friday prayers, and Christian legislators were afraid to visit.

Assurances by Muslim and local government leaders that non-Muslims had nothing to fear from Shari'a, as it would not be applied to them, largely were rejected by non-Muslims. There was deep-seated concern among mainstream Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and others, that the implementation of Shari'a would undermine the country's tradition of religious tolerance and plurality. Some worried that women's rights would be endangered. Others complained that Shari'a was being used for political ends (in the case of Aceh, to erode support for the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) of Muslim separatists). A number of Christians and Muslim moderates have expressed serious concern that these efforts to implement Shari'a foreshadow a growing influence of fundamentalist Islamic ideas.

Several small fundamentalist Islamic groups called for the national adoption of Shari'a by adding a sentence to the Constitution stating that there is an "obligation for Muslims to adhere to the Islamic faith"—the so-called Jakarta Charter. This was the latest in a long string of attempts by some fundamentalist Muslims to have a Shari'a requirement added into the Constitution. Among those opposing changes to the Constitution were the two largest Muslim organizations, the NU and the Muhammadiyah, as well as Christian, Buddhist, Confucian and Hindu organizations.

In May 2002, the mayor of West Jakarta was embroiled in controversy after issuing a municipal decree requiring Muslim students at public and private elementary schools, and junior and senior high schools to wear Muslim attire on Fridays. Non-Muslim students were required to wear a tie with their usual uniform. The ensuing uproar resulted in the lifting of the requirement. A spokesman for the mayoralty said the regulation was intended to make students, especially female students, wear "polite clothes" instead of the miniskirts that currently were in vogue. The plan also allegedly was intended to reduce the high number of student brawls in the area, because it was thought that it would be embarrassing for students to fight while wearing Islamic garb.

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; however, 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 former President Wahid's cabinet had 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 subordi-

nates, 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 former 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, as interpreted in the country, a divorced wife is entitled to only 3 months of alimony, and even alimony for this brief period is not always granted.

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 inter-religious 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, during 2000 and 2001, 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.

During the period covered by this report, inter-religious and inter-ethnic violence in the Moluccas and Sulawesi continued, although at a lower level than in 2000 and early 2001. In the Moluccas, Central Sulawesi, Papua, and Kalimantan, economic tensions between local or native persons (predominantly non-Muslim) and more recently arrived migrants (predominantly Muslim), who were seen by indigenous communities as economically advantaged, were a significant factor in incidents of inter-religious and inter-ethnic violence.

In the Moluccas, where the population is roughly equally divided between Muslims and Christians, at least 100 persons were killed and over 300,000 persons were displaced due to violence between Muslims and Christians during the period covered by this report. According to some estimates, the number of those displaced could be as high as 425,000 or even higher. The violence was exacerbated by outside groups, most notably the Java-based Muslim group Laskar Jihad, (or "holy war troops"), which sent thousands of fighters to the Moluccas in 2000 to fight alongside local Muslims who were fighting local Christians. The Laskar Jihad's intervention gave the Muslims the upper hand in many areas where Christians had been equal to or stronger than their Muslim neighbors. The partiality of some members of the armed forces and police, who at times supported either Muslim or Christian groups depending upon their own religious loyalties or provincial origins, also contributed to the violence. Nonetheless, the overall level of violence in the Moluccas declined during the period covered by this report, with fewer wide-scale attacks but more bombings and targeted strikes.

The Laskar Jihad, 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).

From July to November 2000, the Government largely was ineffective in deterring inter-religious 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 Chris-

tian leaders, the anti-Christian sentiment behind the violence in the Moluccas and elsewhere is not new, but the failure of the Government to punish the perpetrators associated with such acts is new. They claim that such impunity contributed significantly to the continuation and spread of the violence. 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.

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. Former 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.

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 between May and 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.

During the second half of 2001, in Sulawesi, an estimated 25 persons were killed and 58,030 others were displaced. Between June and December 2001, Laskar Jihad members threw three bombs into 12 different Christian villages, causing the villagers to flee. After the villagers fled, members of Laskar Jihad ransacked the villages and razed them.

In December 2001, the Government deployed 4,000 elite soldiers and police officers to Sulawesi. That same month, the Government brought the Muslim and Christian communities together to negotiate. Their discussions, at Malino, produced the Malino Declaration (Malino I), which was signed on December 20, 2001. The arrival of the security forces and the implementation of Malino I greatly reduced the violence in Sulawesi, which began in late 1998.

However, on January 1, 2002 bombs exploded outside of three churches in the Central Sulawesi capital of Palu. On June 5, 2002, a passenger bus packed with commuters in Central Sulawesi was bombed, killing five persons, including a Protestant minister. Although many suspected the Laskar Jihad might have been involved in the bus bombing, the Muslim militia group denied responsibility. Many persons had warned that Muslim militants would renew their attacks if the Government reduced the number of security forces in Central Sulawesi.

In February 2002, the Government hosted another round of talks in Malino that produced another agreement (Malino II) between Muslims and Christians to work for peace. The Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Jusuf Kalla, outlined the Malino II Peace Plan, which involved the disarming of local combatants; the rehabilitation and reconstruction of destroyed homes, schools and places of worship; and the removal of outsiders who had entered the area during the conflict. The Government has appointed a special commission to investigate the violence, unify reinforced police and military units under a single commander, and increase efforts to disarm the populace.

In early April 2002, the newly signed peace agreement suffered a setback after a bombing killed 4 persons and injured 50 others in the Moluccas. Christian mobs angered by the seemingly one-sided policies of the authorities, which appeared to favor Muslims, burned down the Governor's office complex. These mobs also destroyed the main meeting place between Christians and Muslims in the partitioned city of Ambon. The offices of a number of international organizations and NGOs, including the UN headquarters, also were destroyed. Coordinating Minister of Political and Security Affairs Yudhoyono instructed the authorities in Ambon to restore order and bring those responsible to trial. After order was restored, local Christian and Muslim leaders pledged to revive reconciliation talks and to take measures.

However, on April 25, 2002, a well organized and peaceful demonstration by separatists set off another round of violence in Ambon. In response Muslim mobs opposed to the secessionists crossed into the Christian sector of the city and firebombed a church. Soon afterwards, Muslims were involved in a shootout with the police that left 2 Muslim protesters dead. Other explosions and shootings were heard throughout the city. Soon after these incidents, the leader of Laskar Jihad visited Ambon.

On April 28, 2002, dozens of hooded militiamen razed the Christian village of Soya, in Ambon, burned its church, and killed 12 persons. The Soya attack came hours after the Laskar Jihad commander, Ja'far Umar Thalib, delivered an inflammatory speech in which he stated that there would be no reconciliation with Christians and that Muslims had to prepare for armed combat. The Government, which had drawn criticism for failing to bring to justice perpetrators of the violence, and for failing to prevent the influx of thousands of Laskar Jihad fighters to the area, responded by arresting Thalib on May 4, 2002. Thalib's detention sparked violent confrontations in Maluku that left 2 persons dead.

In mid-May 2002, the commander of the elite Army Strategic Reserves (KOSTRAD), Ryamizard Ryacudu, who was overseeing the deployment of 3000 rapid reaction forces to Ambon, exhorted his troops to remain neutral. However, the following day, he ordered his troops to destroy the Republic of South Maluku (RMS) Christian separatist movement, urging his men not to be afraid to "kill them all" if necessary. At the same time, the Government has taken no action to force Laskar Jihad troops out of the region. On May 25, 2002, 5 Christians were killed and at least 9 others were wounded when unidentified attackers in two speedboats opened fire on a passenger ferry off of Haruku island.

In Sulawesi the violence was not restricted to Christians and Muslims during the period covered by this report. The central part of the island is home to many ethnic Balinese Hindus who were attacked by Muslims who accused them of helping Christians. The Hindus had, for example, refused Laskar Jihad the right to pass through their village. Other conflicts involving members of different religions occurred in various parts of the country during the period covered by this report, including disputes in Kalimantan between ethnic Madurese, who are predominantly Muslim, and indigenous Dayaks, who are predominantly Christian. The nature of these disputes primarily is ethnic, not religious, with economic and political overtones.

Although the conflict in Aceh is cast in religious overtones, the fighting is in fact due more to economic and ethnic tensions than religious intolerance. Despite Government claims that violence in Aceh virtually has ended, the GAM forces still operate widely in East and North Aceh. Regular military troops in the field are more disciplined than they were during 2000 and 2001. However, special plainclothes military units regularly kidnap, torture, and kill civilians and guerillas alike. Paramilitary "Brimob" police commit similar offenses. Recent negotiations between the GAM and the Government held in Geneva in May 2002 resulted in agreements to discuss a ceasefire and to conduct an "all-inclusive dialog" on the basis of Jakarta's Special Autonomy scheme. However, the GAM and Government representatives in Banda Aceh gave widely differing interpretations of the agreements. As of June 2002, violence continued, while progress towards a peaceful solution moved slowly. Nonetheless, negotiations have made modest progress.

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. 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. There have been unconfirmed reports of mass forced conversions of Christians; however, these allegations diminished during the period covered by this report.

There were no religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

Unlike during the previous reporting period, there were no confirmed reports of forced religious conversions during the period covered by this report. This change coincided with a general deescalation of violence in the country's main areas of inter-religious conflict (the Moluccas and Sulawesi). Laskar Jihad militants have forced Christians in some areas of the Moluccas either to convert to Islam, leave the area, or to face death. It is unknown how many Christians, if any, were actually executed by Laskar Jihad. Of the thousands of Christians and hundreds of Muslims who underwent forced conversions between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2001 (many of whom had been threatened with death if they did not convert), most subsequently reverted to their former faith after government security forces established a pres-

ence in their communities. However, some locations, including the Christian majority community of Bula, on the Moluccan island of Seram, were deemed too remote for a security force presence to be established. During the period covered by this report, the religious status of Bula's 200 former Protestants was unclear. There were unconfirmed reports that local government officials, largely village heads, were complicit in some of the mass conversions in 2000 and 2001.

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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

The inter-religious violence that began in the eastern part of the country in late 1998 and early 1999 resulted in thousands of deaths before easing in late 2001. In late 2001, the Government finally took action by brokering peace accords, effectively deploying troops, and cracking down on extremists. However, the Government was criticized for not acting sooner to halt the violence. Sulawesi and the Moluccas both began to experience periods of stability and relative peace. However, the calm owes little to the Malino II peace process and more to the massive deployment of forces that accompanied it, including the special police units that curtailed Laskar Jihad activities.

In June 2002, the Government established an independent team of investigators to probe the conflict in the Moluccas. The 14 member team consisted mainly of civil servants and was tasked to investigate several key incidents, including the clash between a resident and a driver on January 19, 1999, which initiated the conflict between Muslims and Christians.

To promote religious pluralism, President Megawati inaugurated an interfaith dialog in Yogyakarta on June 24, 2002. Among the participants were 120 religious leaders from different faiths.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious intolerance increasingly was evident during the period covered by this report, and became a matter of growing concern to many Indonesians. Apart from the violence in the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi, religious intolerance occasionally manifested itself elsewhere in the country in the form of attacks on churches. During the second half of 2001, at least 30 churches were either forcibly closed or destroyed in Sulawesi, West Java, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Aceh and Buru Island. There were no reports of any mosques being destroyed during the period covered by this report.

Religious intolerance, especially on the part of Muslim extremists 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 inter-religious violence in the Moluccas, although at a lower level than in 2000 and 2001. 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, multi-religious society that, historically, has experienced outbursts of religious intolerance and violence.

There were numerous attacks on churches and some attacks on mosques in various locations throughout the country during 2000 and 2001, 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. In the second half of 2001, 29 churches were either forcibly closed or destroyed in Sulawesi, West Java, Jakarta, Yoyakarta, Semarang, and Buru Island. There also were unconfirmed reports of Christian church closures in the Acehnese district of Singkil. This represented a sharp decline from the 108 church closures and destructions reported in the previous 6 month period. Few if any of the latest attacks were investigated thoroughly by the authorities, and there were no reports of perpetrators being punished. According to the Indonesian Christian Communication Forum, from January 1999 to April 2001, 327 churches were closed or destroyed, while the Ministry of Religion reported 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).

Attacks on mosques in the conflict-torn Moluccas continued during 2000 and 2001. However, there were no attacks on mosques reported during the period covered by

this report. The Maluku provincial government reported that four mosques were attacked or destroyed in 2000 and 2001, while the North Maluku provincial government reported no attacks on mosques during the same time period. In late May 2001, a mob of allegedly pro-President Wahid supporters associated with the NU burned a mosque associated with rival Muhammadiyah followers in Pasuruan, East Java. Also in late May 2001, a mob of 400 persons vandalized the retreat of Jamaah Salamulla (an Islamic group) in Bogor, West Java.

In the easternmost province of Papua, Muslims constitute a religious minority (although in the districts of Sorong and Fakfak, Muslims account for roughly half of the population). The arrival of Muslim migrants from other parts of the country in the past has precipitated attacks on mosques. However, no mosque attacks in Papua were reported during the period covered by this report, although one mosque was shut down temporarily by the authorities until a tax matter was resolved. In Papua there are reports that the Muslim group Laskar Jihad is working with nationalist militias supported by members of the military and the police. These groups oppose Papuan separatism, which is a secular movement. The presence of Laskar Jihad, accompanied by some militant foreign Muslims, raised fears that the group would add to existing tensions by inciting religious conflict in the province.

Among factors contributing to religious intolerance, are underlying socioeconomic and political competition and tensions. In the Moluccas, Central Sulawesi, 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 inter-religious and inter-ethnic violence.

Public expressions of Islam began to grow significantly in the early 1990s and increased after the fall of the Suharto government in 1998. The number of religious schools (pesantrens and madrasahs), mosques, Shari'a banks, and other businesses, civic groups, media outlets, and political parties associated with Islam (see Section II) all grew. Muslims continued to seek greater political empowerment through the country's Islamic political parties (the current number of Islamic parties, as opposed to the 13 that stood for election in 1999, is unknown), as well as through religious organizations. The number of stores selling Islamic attire and religious objects also continued to increase during the period covered by this report, and more women donned head scarves or "jilbab." In 2001 an estimated 193,000 citizens made the Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage)—up 19,000 from the previous year. In 2002 the number rose to an estimated 197,000, but this was below the expectations of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which predicted that the country would exceed its pilgrimage quota of 213,000 persons for the year. The Islamic publication, Sabili, 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 remained overwhelmingly moderate. However, with the removal of Suharto-era restrictions on religious organizations and expression, there have been some public calls by a minority of Muslims for the creation of an Islamic state. Only 7 to 10 percent of the country's Muslims advocate the creation of an Islamic state which would make it obligatory for Muslims to follow Shari'a law. The majority of these Muslims pursue their goal through peaceful means, but a small, vocal minority condones coercive measures and has resorted to violence. Extremist groups advocating coercion and resorting to violence include: Laskar Jihad, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the Hizbullah Front, the Laskar Mujahidin, the Campus Association of Muslim Students (HAMMAS), the Jundullah Troops (Laskar Jundullah), the Islamic Youth Movement (GPI), and the Surakarta Islamic Youth Forum (FPIS). 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.

Since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, there has been greater freedom of expression, and lewd material has become more widely available. Against this backdrop, some extremist groups have acted publicly to root out vice. The country's official Islamic authority, the MUI, conducted a campaign against domestic broadcasters and print media outlets, accusing them of increasingly disseminating lewd and pornographic materials. On March 7, 2002, hundreds of FPI members attacked a pool hall in the Casablanca area of south Jakarta. The attack came during the Muslim New Year, and the attackers accused the establishment of failing to respect the holiday. Hours earlier FPI members had approached bars and discos in central Jakarta and demanded that they close for the night. On June 26, 2002, approximately 200 FPI members smashed beer bottles, signs and windows in the popular Jaksa street area of Jakarta, in full view of the police, who merely stood by and did nothing in response. In December 2001, during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, the group raided pubs and cafes in Tebet, south Jakarta. Police criticized the attacks, but no FPI member was ever arrested. It is believed widely by the pub-

lic that Jakarta police used FPI to enforce its protection rackets and as a result the police condoned or even directed its attacks. Before that night, during FPI "vice raids," the groups bypassed some bars and pool halls on the same street while obviously targeting others.

Political tensions among Muslim groups became more intense during 2000 and 2001, in particular between the 2 largest Muslim social organizations, the NU, which is associated politically with former President Wahid, and the Muhammadiyah, which is associated politically with Amien Rais Chairman of the National Mandate Party (PAN) and Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). 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 former President Wahid while the PMII, which is associated with the 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 the Muhammadiyah, while many of the Muslim members of the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (also ICRP) were NU supporters.

Christians in various parts of the archipelago expressed fear over perceived attempts to "Islamize" the country, but there also was concern, mainly among Muslims, that Christians were trying to "Christianize" the country. Some complained that the number and activities of Christian fundamentalist groups were increasing, and that such groups were influenced and funded by foreign groups. Others argued 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 stated that they were referring to these charismatic Christian 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. Following the May 2002 arrest of Laskar Jihad commander Thalib, several Islamic groups demanded that the Government reinvestigate the case of Theo Sya'fei, a Christian and a high-ranking official in the PDI party. In November 1998 he had, like Thalib, made a provocative speech, which was recorded and distributed within the Christian community. Muslims claimed that Sya'fei's speech sparked a rampage in the city of Kupang, West Timor, which resulted in the destruction of 23 mosques, 7 schools, and 4 office buildings, and caused 4,000 Muslims to flee the area. During the period covered by this report, police were in the process of reopening the case against Sya'fei, although he had not been charged. Religious enmity also surfaced in the city of Makassar, in South Sulawesi. In October 2001, 6 non-Muslims were assaulted and severely beaten by dozens of students in front of the Indonesian Muslim University. The students had been angered by the burning of an effigy of Osama bin Laden days earlier in the town of Tondano, in North Sulawesi. The assault was stopped only after the university's rector personally dispersed the students. Police promised to take action against the assailants. There was no update on whether the assailants were punished by the end of the period covered by this report.

Members of the mainstream Hindu community, represented by the PHDI, reported no incidents in which followers were discriminated against or harassed. However, some Hindus in Bali expressed discomfort over the screening of a television program called "Angling Dharma," which they found insulting and patronizing. In January 2002, the PHDI petitioned the network involved to stop broadcasting the show.

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 MUI issued a fatwa banning the spread of the Baha'i Faith in the district. Once the MUI issues a fatwa, it is never withdrawn, but since it is an unofficial ban and not a government ban, it carries little weight.

Societal attitudes of some persons, particularly those in rural areas, have been shaped by beliefs in traditional magic, especially what is considered its darker form and is practiced by shamans called "dukun santet." Dukun santet is based in part on the pre-Islamic belief of systems of Aliran Kepercayaan and Kebatinan. Occasionally some dukun santet have been targeted for vigilante justice by those who blame them for random calamities. In May 2002, a dukun santet was killed in the district of Banyumas, Central Java. During the period covered by this report, in Kalimantan

and Java a number of dukun santet were tortured and killed in separate incidents. During the period covered by this report, 94 persons were sentenced to prison for up to 4 years in connection with those crimes. It was unclear what progress, if any, the Government made in the case of 20 persons arrested in Cianjur, West Java, in connection with the killing of a santet in November 2000.

During the period covered by this report, interfaith organizations grew, and their activities enjoyed some media coverage. Among them were the Society for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA), the Indonesia Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI), the Interfidei, the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), and the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also called ICRP), the Indonesian Peace Forum (FID), and the Institute of Gender and Religious Studies. The GANDI worked to repeal regulations it considered discriminatory, particularly toward ethnic Chinese citizens, and particularly targeted Law U.U. No. 1 (1974), which effectively prohibits the marriage of persons from different religions. The MADIA held seminars, discussions, and a cyberforum, frequently focusing on problems related to respect for basic human rights. The group also worked to bring attention to challenges that Sikhs in Medan confront in trying to get their marriages registered.

SECTION IV: U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, the Consulate General in Surabaya, and visiting State Department officials regularly engaged government officials (particularly in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the State Secretariat) on religious freedom issues and also encouraged officials from other embassies to discuss the subject with the Government. U.S. Embassy in Jakarta and the Consulate General officials focused many of these discussions on religious freedom in the Moluccas and Sulawesi.

The U.S. Government also provided funding to the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace, which held a series of seminars on conflict resolution in cities around the country with high potential for conflict. The seminars were designed to initiate free discussion on conflict resolution so that the public could obtain balanced information on issues of inter-group relations. The discussions, held in October and November 2001, included prominent figures from the country's different religious communities. The Embassy also arranged digital video conferences on "Religious Freedom and Tolerance in a Democracy" and "Women and Islam," bringing together several hundred representatives of the various religious communities for discussion of these issues.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate officials regularly met with religious leaders to discuss the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and to encourage inter-religious efforts to mitigate the sectarian conflict in the Moluccas and to combat religious intolerance.

U.S. Embassy and USAID officials worked with domestic and international NGO's to develop methods to mitigate religious conflict and to combat religious intolerance. The U.S. Embassy and the USAID worked with interfaith NGOs, such as the MADIA, both ICRPs and the Interfidei. They also met with international human rights groups and with the National Human Rights Commission (KOMNASHAM) and its branch in Ambon in Maluku Province. The U.S. Embassy promoted religious tolerance through public affairs, exchanges, training programs and engagement with government officials and religious and NGO leaders. The U.S. State Department and USAID funding was used to promote religious freedom, tolerance, and conflict resolution. The U.S. Embassy served as a liaison between the U.S. Government, Congress and Government officials on religious freedom issues and advocated U.S. government positions on areas of concern.

The U.S. Embassy and the U.S.-Indonesian Fulbright Foundation (AMINEF) provided expertise and equipment (including a virtual library on comparative religion) to help establish the country's first graduate-level program on comparative religion at Gadja Mada University in Yogyakarta. The first of its kind in the country, this program is intended to foster competence in religious studies among educators. The long-term objective is to increase inter-religious understanding on college and university campuses. The Embassy renewed a program to send scholars from Islamic institutions to the U.S. for advanced degrees or research. The Embassy has also sent several religious leaders to the U.S. on International Visitor programs.

The USAID also continued its 3-year program aimed at strengthening civil society. Support was extended by the USAID to dozens of religiously affiliated NGOs in an effort to assist the democracy movement within the Muslim community. The USAID funded a conference that brought together leading Muslim intellectuals, who

represent groups working to promote the understanding of secular democracy and its compatibility with Islam.

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 and was renamed Aleph, 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; however, there was some societal discrimination against followers of Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph.

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, and its population is an estimated 127 million. Regular participation in formal religious activities by the public is low, and an accurate determination of the proportions of adherents to specific religions is difficult. According to the latest statistics published by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in December 2000, approximately 50.1 percent of citizens adhered to Shintoism, 44.3 percent to Buddhism, 4.7 percent to so-called "new" religions, and 0.8 percent to Christianity. 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 faiths founded in the country, such as Tenrikyo, Seichounoie, Sekai Kyusei Kyo, Perfect Liberty, and Risho Koseikai. A small segment of the population, predominantly foreign-born residents, attend Orthodox, Jewish, and Islamic services.

There are 28 Buddhist schools recognized by the Government under the 1951 Religious Corporation Law. The major Buddhist schools 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.

According to an April 2001 Justice Ministry report, Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph has an estimated 1,650 followers, a decrease from 10,000 in 1995. However, in May 2002, Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph claimed to have only 1,187 members.

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.

In response to Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attacks in 1995, a 1996 amendment to the Religious Corporation Law gives the authorities increased oversight of religious groups and requires greater disclosure of financial assets by religious corporations. The Diet enacted two additional laws in 1999 aimed at regulating the activities of Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph.

Some Buddhist and Shinto temples and shrines receive public support as national historic or cultural sites. In 1997 the Supreme Court ruled that a prefectural government may not contribute public funds to only one religious organization if the donations will support, encourage, and promote a specific religious group; however, no cases questioning the use of public funds in connection with a religious organization have been brought since 1998.

The Government does not require that religious groups be registered or licensed; however, in order 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 practice almost all religious groups register. The Cultural Affairs Agency listed 182,659 registered religious groups as

of December 2000. However, in recent years, the Cultural Affairs Agency has estimated that as many as 5,000 of these groups are dormant, and the agency has taken legal action in an attempt to remove dormant groups from its registry. Since 1998 courts have accepted requests by the Cultural Affairs Agency to dissolve at least four dormant religious bodies that were registered under the Religious Corporation Law.

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 members for the group's 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system and other crimes. The Tokyo District and High Courts sentenced eight senior members to death and six others to life imprisonment in connection with the 1995 sarin gas attack, as well as the killings of Aum Shinrikyo members who attempted to leave the organization. Another 180 members were sentenced up to 10 years' imprisonment. In August 2001, the Tokyo High Court upheld a lower court ruling that sentenced a member to 17 years imprisonment for his role in a 1994 sarin gas attack in Matsumoto that killed 7 persons. As of the end of the period covered by this report, cases still were pending in district courts against four other senior Aum members, including its leader Shoko Asahara. The Tokyo District Court continues to order Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph to pay several million dollars in compensation to survivors and next-of-kin in connection with these cases. In August 2001, the Tokyo District Court ordered seven former Aum members to pay $475,806 (59 million yen) in compensation to relatives of a man who had been abducted and killed by Aum members in 1995.

In 1999 the Diet enacted two laws allowing the authorities to monitor and inspect without warrant 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 1999 laws also permit the authorities to place restrictions on the use of properties owned by these groups if they are found to engage in aggressive recruiting. The new laws are subject to review in 2005. On the basis of this legislation, the Public Security Examination Commission placed Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph under continuous surveillance in January 2000 for a 3-year period. The Public Security Investigative Agency conducted at least 12 on-site inspections of 27 Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph facilities around the country in connection with the surveillance order during the period covered by this report. In June 2001, the Tokyo District Court rejected an Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph lawsuit that argued the surveillance is a violation of the constitutional right to religious freedom.

Under the l999 laws, Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph also is required to file a report every 3 months, listing member names and addresses. In 2000 the Supreme Court upheld the decision of Ibaraki prefecture to block the school registration of three children of Aum Shinrikyo founder Shoko Asahara; there were no further developments in this case during the period covered by this report.

Security officials investigated the activities of mosques periodically during the fall of 2001.

Members of the Unification Church and Jehovah's Witnesses 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 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 was some societal discrimination against followers of Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph.

In March 2002, Kyushu University officials refused to admit a former Aum member who had passed the University's medical faculty entrance examination on the basis of his past Aum membership. At least eight municipalities in which Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph facilities are active refused to register Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph group members as residents due to opposition by local residents. Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph

filed 8 lawsuits on behalf of 71 members to challenge the refusal to register their members as residents. During the period covered by this report, district courts in Osaka, Nagoya, and Tokyo ordered several municipalities to rescind their decisions to refuse to register Aum Shinrikyo/Aleph members, and also ordered that they pay damages to the applicants. In April and May 2002, the Nagoya High Court and the Tokyo High Court upheld the district court rulings. However, some local authorities continued to appeal the district decisions to higher courts at the end of the period covered by this report.

In November 2001, a woman was convicted for a May 2001 incident in which she threw a defaced copy of the Koran at a place of business owned by a Muslim foreign resident. The Toyama District Court sentenced the woman to a 1-year suspended sentence of penal servitude for the theft of four copies of religious text from a Muslim place of worship. The defendant claimed that she had committed the act to embarrass her family publicly.

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, 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

The country, an island state of approximately 265 square miles, has a population of approximately 90,000. Missionaries introduced Christianity into the area in the mid-19th century. According to 2002 government statistics, major religious groups include: The Roman Catholic Church (55%); the Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC), formerly the Congregational Church (37%); the Seventh-Day Adventists (2%); the Baha'i Faith (2%); and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) (3%). Persons with no religious preference account for about 5 percent of the population.

Missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints operate a school in Tarawa and recruit among the I-Kiribati, the ethnic majority, for missionaries to work within the country and in other Pacific island nations. The Church also sponsors a number of scholarships for I-Kiribati to attend Brigham Young University in Hawaii.

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 strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no state or politically dominant religion. The Government 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 free 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 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 among the country's 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. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA [1]

The Constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief;" however, in practice the Government discourages organized religious activity, except that which is supervised tightly by officially recognized groups linked to the Government. Genuine religious freedom does not exist.

There was no change in the extremely poor level 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 the People's Republic of China (PRC) 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 the "benevolent politics" of the country's leader at that time, Kim Il Sung. Government-sponsored religious groups that were established at that time continue to operate. The Government allowed some foreign religious leaders to visit 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; the impact of these contacts 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. In October 2001, the Secretary of State designated the DPRK as a "Country of Particular Concern" for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

The Government does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other invited visitors the freedom of movement that would enable them to assess fully human rights conditions in the country. 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 information is nonetheless indicative of the religious freedom situation in the country today.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 47,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 21 million. The number of religious believers is unknown but has been estimated by the Government at 10,000 Protestants, 10,000 Buddhists, and 4,000 Catholics. Estimates by South Korean church-related groups are considerably higher. In addition the Chondogyo Young Friends Party, a government-approved group based on a traditional religious movement, still exists. According to

[1] The United States does not have an embassy in North Korea. This report draws heavily on non-U.S. Government sources.

the Government, the number of practitioners of the Chondogyo religion is approximately 40,000. 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 the Haeinsa temple in the South. In the late 1980's, the Government sent two Roman Catholic men to study for ordination 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. In 2002, according to a South Korean press report, the chairman of the Association of North Korean Catholics stated that the Catholic community in the North has no priest, but that weekly prayer services are held at the Changchung Catholic Church in Pyongyang.

Two Protestant churches under lay leadership—the Pongsu and Chilgok churches—and a Roman Catholic church (without a priest) have been open since 1988 in Pyongyang. One of the Protestant churches is dedicated to the memory of former North Korean 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 some visitors agree, 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. Vatican representatives, including Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Vatican Undersecretary for Relations with States, visited the country in November 2000 and in May 2002. On each occasion, the delegation reported meeting with the Catholic community in Pyongyang, and with officials of the Association of North Korean Catholics. During the 2002 visit, the delegation celebrated the Feast of the Ascension with the local and international Catholic community at the Changchung Church in Pyongyang. In July 2001, a delegation from the Seoul Archdiocese of the Catholic Church visited the country and met with officials 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. A noodle factory established by contributions from Catholics from the Seoul Archdiocese opened in 2001. The Unification Church, which has business ventures in the country, is constructing an interfaith religious facility in Pyongyang.

There are an estimated 300 Buddhist temples in the country. Most of the temples are regarded as cultural relics, but religious activity is permitted in some of them. On June 4, 2002, Kim Jong Il visited the Ryangchon Buddhist temple in South Hamgyong Province. Although his comments during the visit centered on preserving the country's cultural relics, his appearance at any religious site is noteworthy.

There have been unconfirmed reports of members of underground Christian churches. Some older citizens who were religious believers before 1953 reportedly have maintained their faith in secret over the years.

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."

"Juche," or self-reliance, the Government's cult of personality and state ideology, has become a kind of civil religion used by the Government as a "spiritual" underpinning for its rule. As defined by Kim Il Sung, juche is a quasi-mystical concept in which the collective will of the populace is distilled into a supreme leader. Refusal on religious or other grounds to accept the leader as the supreme authority exemplifying the State and society's needs thus is regarded as opposition to the national interest.

Until the 1940's, Pyongyang was a major center of Christianity on the Korean Peninsula. However, many Christians in the North fled to the South between 1945 and 1953. 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 anti-religious activity." The Government began to moderate its religious discrimination policies in the late 1980's, when it launched a campaign highlighting Kim Il Sung'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 genuinely are 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. A constitutional change in 1992 deleted the clause regarding freedom of anti-religious propaganda, authorized religious gatherings, and provided for "the right to build buildings for religious use."

The inter-Korean summit in mid-June 2000 led to an increase in contacts with persons in the Republic of Korea. Civic groups in the South, including religious organizations, have been active in efforts to promote inter-Korean reconciliation, including participation in North-South activities such as Liberation Day celebrations. Discussions between these groups and their Northern counterparts generally have been limited to promoting social and cultural exchanges. The impact of these contacts on religious freedom in North Korea remains unclear.

Several schools for religious education exist. There are 3-year 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 subjected 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 PRC may become entwined with more political goals, including overthrow of the regime. The food crisis apparently has heightened government concern about anti-regime 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.

Little is known about the day-to-day 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 do not practice religion are able to rise to at least the middle levels of the bureaucracy, despite their family background. In the past, such individuals suffered broad discrimination. Members of underground churches connected to border missionary activity appear to be regarded as subversive elements.

In July 2001, the U.N. Human Rights Committee noted "with regret" that the Government was unable to provide up-to-date information about religious freedom in the country. The Committee also noted, "in the light of information available to the Committee that religious practice is repressed or strongly discouraged" in the country, its concern regarding the authorities' practice with respect to religious freedom. The Committee requested that the Government provide the Committee with up-to-date information regarding the number of citizens belonging to religious communities and the number of places of worship, as well as "practical measures taken by the authorities to guarantee freedom of exercise of religious practice" by the religious communities in the country.

In June 2001, a North Korean delegation visited Brussels to discuss human rights issues with the European Union (EU), and in October 2001, the Director General

of the External Relations Department of the EU stated that the North Korean responses to his queries on the reported persecution of Christians in the country and on other human rights issues were "inconclusive" and "tentative."

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government deals harshly with all opponents, including those engaging in religious practices deemed unacceptable to the regime. Religious and human rights groups outside of the country have provided numerous, unconfirmed reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, or killed because of their religious beliefs. According to an unconfirmed report, 7 Christian men, ranging in age from 15 to 58 years, were 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. Defectors interviewed by a former humanitarian aid worker claimed that Christians were imprisoned and tortured for reading the Bible and talking about God, and that some Christians were subjected to biological warfare experiments. These reports, and reports of even higher numbers of killings, could not be confirmed or disproved because of the effectiveness of the Government in barring outside observers.

In April 1999 and in May and June 2002, 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. 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. Another individual testified that in 1990, while serving a sentence in a prison that had a cast-iron factory, she witnessed the killing of several elderly Christians by security officers who poured molten iron on them after they refused to renounce their religion and accept the state ideology of juche. Because the country is a closed society, such allegations could not be substantiated.

Nonetheless, the collective weight of anecdotal evidence over the years 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 executions, 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 period covered by this report. There were unconfirmed reports that repatriated North Korean defectors who were found to have contacted Christian missionaries outside the North were punished severely, and in some cases were executed. News reports indicated that the Government had taken steps to tighten control and increase 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. According to a 2001 press report, 6,000 Christians were being held in Prison Number 15 in the northern part of the country. In 2000, a religious publication reported an unnamed South Korean pastor's claim that there were approximately 100,000 Christians among those imprisoned in labor camps. These reports could not be confirmed.

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

There was no information available on societal attitudes toward religious freedom. The regime does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other visitors the freedom of movement that would enable them to assess religious freedom in the country fully.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States does not have diplomatic relations with the DPRK 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. In October 2001, the Secretary of State designated the DPRK as a "Country of Particular Concern" for particularly severe violations of
religious freedom.

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 its population is approximately 47 million. According to the most recent government survey, taken in 1995 (when the population was 44,600,000), the country's major religions and the number of adherents of each at that time were: 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 were 21,593,000 citizens who did not practice any religion. While the population has increased since 1995, the percentage of adherents of each faith has remained approximately the same in recent years. Although no official figures are available for the number of adherents of other religions, these include 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 members of Jehovah's Witnesses also are present.

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, Presbyterian, and Anglican churches, and the Korean Gospel Church Assembly. Among those practicing a faith, 41.7 percent reported that they attended religious services or rituals at a temple or church at least once per week. Six percent responded that they attended religious services 2 to 3 times per month; 9.4 percent attended once per month; 6.8 percent attended once every 2 to 3 months; 26.9 percent attended once per year; and 9.2 percent did not attend services. Among practicing Buddhists, 1.2 percent responded that they attended religious services. A total of 71.5 percent of Protestants and 60.4 percent of Catholics responded that they attended religious services.

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 Government does not require or permit religious instruction in public schools. Private schools are free to hold religious activities.

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 free 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 the execution of the sentence, equivalent to probation or a suspended sentence. He appealed this decision, and at a hearing of his appeal on May 10, 2002, the court sentenced him to 8 months' imprisonment (a reduction of the original 2-year sentence) and again granted him a 2-year stay of the sentence. Father Moon reportedly was planning to lodge a final appeal, but had not done so 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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious groups generally are amicable and free of incident, and religious tolerance is widespread. In 2000 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 government auspices 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. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. 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 improved moderately during the period covered by this report. The Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC), the popular front organization for the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), is responsible for oversight of religious practice. The LFNC's efforts to instruct local officials to tolerate minority religions contributed to a decrease in arrests and forced renunciations of Christianity in some areas that previously had experienced significant abuse of Christian congregations. In addition, although authorities continued to close some Protestant churches in several provinces, the number of church closings was fewer than in the period covered by the previous report.

In the beginning of 2002, authorities allowed some of these closed churches to reopen. However, problems remained and officials in some localities continued to attempt to force believers to renounce their faith, although no instances of forced renunciation were reported after December 2001. There were 6 known religious prisoners and 13 detainees, all Christians, at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were generally amicable relations among the various religious groups in society; however, officials have reported that tensions over religious practice occasionally occurred in some villages, often resulting from conflicts over use of village resources or from proselytizing. Since many adherents of minority religions are ethnic minorities, conflicts between ethnic groups also have contributed to religious tensions.

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 need for greater religious freedom at senior as well as at working levels of the central Government and the LPRP, and remained in frequent contact with religious leaders.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 85,000 square miles, and its estimated population is approximately 5.2 million. Approximately 60 to 65 percent of the population, most of whom are lowland Lao, follow Theravada Buddhism. Followers of animism, the second largest religion, are estimated at 30 percent of the population, and are found among Lao Theung (mid-slope dwelling) and Lao Soung (highland) minority tribes. Animist beliefs and practices greatly vary between 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 approximately 2 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 serving the Lao-Chinese community. Buddhist monks from Vietnam, China, and India have visited these pagodas freely to conduct services and to minister to worshipers. There are at least four more large Mahayana Buddhist pagodas in other urban centers. There also are unconfirmed reports of other smaller Mahayana pagodas in villages near the borders of Vietnam and China. Buddhist nuns reportedly serve some of these pagodas. Whether a monk could reside permanently in any of these pagodas is unknown; the key determinant appears to be the expense for the congregation. Reportedly 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, many of whom are ethnic Vietnamese, concentrated in major urban centers along the Mekong River. The Catholic church 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. The Catholic church has an established presence in five of the most populous central and southern provinces, where Catholics are able to worship openly. However, the Catholic church's activities are circumscribed in the north, and a once thriving Catholic community in Luang Prabang province now is moribund. 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 fourth bishop, for the northern part of the country, has not been allowed to take up his post in Luang Prabang and remains in residence in Vientiane. A Catholic training center in Thakhek is training a small number of priests to serve the Catholic community. In addition several foreign nuns have served temporarily in the Vientiane diocese.

Approximately 250 to 300 Protestant congregations conducted services throughout the country for a Protestant community that has grown rapidly in the past decade; church officials estimate Protestants number approximately 60,000. The LFNC recognizes two Protestant groups: the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC), which is the umbrella Protestant Church, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The LFNC strongly encourages all other Protestant groups to become part of the LEC church. Most Protestants belong to the LEC church. The majority of Protestants are members of ethnic Mon-Khmer tribes; however, in recent years, many lowland Lao have become converts, and many ethnic Hmong also are Protestants. Most of the LEC church membership is concentrated in Vientiane municipality, in the provinces of Vientiane, Sayaboury, Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, Bolikhamsai, Savannakhet,

Champassak, Attapeu, and in the Saisomboun Special Zone, but smaller congregations are found throughout the country. The Seventh-Day Adventist congregation numbers approximately 700 followers in Vientiane and in the south. The Government has granted permission to four Protestant congregations from the two approved denominations to have church buildings in the Vientiane area. In addition the LEC church maintains properties in Savannakhet and Pakse. Several LEC church properties in Savannakhet and Pakse were seized by the Government after 1975, but were returned to the church in the early 1990's. Two informal churches, one English-speaking and one Korean-speaking, service Vientiane's foreign Christian community.

Within the LEC church, some congregations seek greater independence and have forged their own connections with Protestant groups abroad. As the LEC church has grown, an increased diversity of views has emerged among adherents and pastors; however, the Government is unlikely to approve the registration of a separate denomination.

There are approximately 400 adherents of Islam in the country, the vast majority of whom are foreign permanent residents of Middle Eastern and Cambodian (Cham) origin. 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. 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 authorities, particularly at the local level, interfere with this right in practice. Article 30 of the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, however, Article 9 discourages all acts that create divisions among religions and persons. The LPRP and the Government appear to interpret this constitutional provision narrowly, and consequently inhibit religious practice by all persons, especially those belonging to minority religions. Although official pronouncements accept the existence of different religions, they emphasize the potential to divide, distract, or destabilize. Many local officials, as well as some senior officials in the central Government and the LPRP, appear to interpret Article 9 as justification to prohibit proselytizing and to discourage religious conversions, especially to Christianity.

The absence of rule of law has created an atmosphere in which authorities may act with impunity against persons regarded as posing a threat to social order. Religious practitioners arrested for their religious activities have been charged with exaggerated security or other criminal offenses. Persons detained may be held for lengthy periods without trial. Court judges, not juries, decide guilt or innocence in court cases, and an accused person's defense rights are limited. A person arrested or convicted for religious offenses has little protection under the law. All religious groups, including Buddhists, practice their faith in an atmosphere in which the application of the law is arbitrary. Certain actions interpreted by officials as threatening may bring harsh punishment. Religious practice is "free" only if the practitioners stay within tacitly-understood guidelines of what is "acceptable" to the Government and the LPRP.

To establish clearer guidelines than those provided by the Constitution on the rights and obligations of religious faiths, the Department of Religious Affairs in the LFNC drafted regulations for religious organizations in late 1999. Subsequently, numerous government agencies as well as senior leaders of the major religious groups reviewed the draft regulations. Following a series of reviews and modifications, some made at the request of religious leaders, the regulations were forwarded to the Office of the Prime Minister in late 2001 for preparation to issue them as a Prime Ministerial Decree. The Prime Minister's Office reportedly was reviewing the final drafts of the regulations but had yet to promulgate the new rules by the end of the period covered by this report. Although religious leaders who have read the draft regulations generally have concluded that they will have a positive effect on religious freedom, some critics who have reviewed them believe that they will continue to limit religious freedom.

The Constitution provides that the State "mobilizes and encourages" monks, novices, and priests of other religions to participate in activities "beneficial to the nation and the people." The Department of Religious Affairs in the LFNC is respon-

sible 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, time consuming, and results in few new facilities. Some groups do not submit applications for establishment of places of worship because they do not believe that their applications will be approved.

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, and oversight of temples and other facilities constitute less a form of favoritism than a means to supervise, limit and monitor 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.

Animists generally experienced no interference from the Government in their religious practices. However, the Government actively discourages animist practices that it regards as outdated, unhealthy, or illegal, such as the practice in some tribes of infanticide of infants born with defects or of keeping the bodies of deceased relatives in homes.

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.

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. During the period covered by this report, the Government paid closer scrutiny to the activities of the small Muslim population, but did not interfere with the community's religious activities.

The small Seventh-Day Adventist Church has reported no government interference in its activities in recent years, and its members appear to be free to practice their faith.

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.

There is no religious instruction in public schools, nor are there any parochial or religiously affiliated schools operating in the country. In practice many boys spend some time in Buddhist temples, where they receive instruction in religion as well as in academics. Temples traditionally have filled the role of schools and continue to play this role in smaller communities where formal education is limited or unavailable.

The Government has only one semi-religious 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 most senior officials openly attend them. The Government permits major religious festivals of all established congregations without hindrance.

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 and by religion, with Christian Protestants continuing to be the target of most harassment. Although generally not subjected to harassment, the Buddhist hierarchy is subject to close oversight by the Government. 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 members of minority religious denominations. However, the LFNC took measures during the period covered by this report to mitigate the arbitrary behavior of local officials in some areas where harassment of Christian religious minorities had been most severe. These efforts resulted in a few areas where there was notable improvement and others where there was only marginal or no improvement. Some parts of the country, especially urban areas, experienced little or no overt religious abuse. However, even in these areas, believers who actively proselytized or took leadership positions feared arrest or other harassment, given the lack of clear legal safeguards for religious minorities. Although there was almost complete freedom to worship among unregis-

tered 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 2001 local authorities closed approximately 20 of Vientiane province's 60 LEC churches, primarily those in Hin Hoep, Feuang, and Vang Vieng districts. During 1999 and 2001, district and provincial authorities, supported by police, closed approximately 65 LEC churches in Savannakhet and Luang Prabang provinces. Many of these closed churches were allowed to reopen in 2002, especially in Vientiane province; however, the majority remained closed at the end of the period covered by this report.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that security forces in some villages set up roadblocks to prevent villagers from traveling to Sunday worship services. Previously many groups of coreligionists seeking to assemble in a new location were thwarted in attempts to meet, practice, or to celebrate major religious festivals.

Although in general officials in southern provinces were more tolerant of minority religious practice than in the north, some local harassment continued to persist. For example, many converts must undergo a series of harsh government interviews; however, after overcoming this initial barrier, the converts generally are permitted to practice their new faith unhindered.

The LEC church encountered difficulties registering new congregations and receiving permission to establish new places of worship or to expand existing facilities, including facilities in Vientiane; however, unlike in the previous reporting period, no other minority religious groups encountered such difficulties. Authorities appeared to be using these measures to limit the LEC churches' growth. Congregations that have been denied permission to establish churches often conduct informal services in members' homes. In addition authorities continued to require new denominations to join other religious groups having similar historical antecedents, despite clear differences between the groups' beliefs. The LFNC strongly encourages all Protestant groups to become a part of the LEC church and has not allowed other Protestant Churches, other than the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, to operate openly. Nonetheless, there are some practicing Protestant congregations that are not associated with the LEC church.

The authorities continued to remain suspicious of patrons of religious communities other than Buddhism, especially Christian groups, in part because these faiths do not share the high degree of direction and incorporation into the government structure that Theravada Buddhism experiences. Some authorities criticized Christianity in particular as a Western or imperialist "import" into the country. Local authorities, probably with the encouragement from some officials in the central Government or LPRP, appear to have singled out the LEC church as a target of harassment—the majority of church closings, arrest of religious leaders, and forced renunciations of faith have been directed against the LEC church. The LEC churches' rapid growth over the last decade, its contact with religious groups abroad, the active proselytizing on the part of some of its members, and its independence of central Government control all have contributed to the Government's and the LPRP's suspicion of the church's activities. Some authorities also have chosen to interpret Christian teachings of obedience to God as signifying disloyalty to the Government and Party. The membership of the LEC church is made up mostly of members of ethnic Mon-Khmer tribes and Hmong, two groups that historically have resisted central Government control, and this has contributed to the Government's and the LPRP's distrust of the church.

The Government restricted the celebration of major Christian holidays by some congregations. Some LEC church congregations in remote areas of Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, and Sayaboury provinces were not permitted to celebrate Christmas and Easter holidays during the period covered by this report. In addition local authorities in several areas on occasion attempted to force Christian communities to adhere to Buddhist practices by working on Sundays or resting on Buddhist holy days. There were no reports of official interference in or denial of permission to hold religious celebrations of other religious groups. Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports of security forces stopping all large vehicles that carried multiple passengers during Sunday worship hours to prevent villagers from traveling to attend worship services.

The Catholic Church has experienced little overt harassment in recent years, but long-standing restrictions on its operations in the north have shut down the once thriving Catholic community in Luang Prabang and have left only a handful of small congregations in Sayaboury, Bokeo, and Luang Namtha. Authorities have refused to grant permission to the Bishop of Luang Prabang, who lives in Vientiane, to live in his own diocese. During the period covered by this report, authorities continued to restrict the Bishop's travel to his diocese, allowing him regular visits to

Sayaboury province only. There are no ordained Catholic priests operating in the north. The former Catholic Church in Luang Prabang was seized by authorities after 1975 and has not been returned to the church. In the central and southern parts of the country, Catholic congregations are able to practice their religion freely.

The Government prohibits foreigners from proselytizing, although it permits foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) 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; however, on several occasions, persons found proselytizing with religious material were subject to arrest for "creating social divisions." Nevertheless, religious followers do proselytize, resulting in new conversions.

The Government does not permit the printing of non-Buddhist religious texts or their distribution outside a congregation and restricts importation of foreign non-Buddhist religious texts and artifacts. On occasion authorities have seized religious material brought into the country from abroad. Persons bringing in religious material face possible arrest. Because of these restrictions, some approved Christian congregations have complained of difficulty obtaining Bibles and religious material.

The Government generally does not interfere with the travel of its citizens wishing to go abroad for short-term religious training; however, it requires that such travelers notify authorities of the purpose of their travel and obtain permission in advance. In practice many persons of all faiths travel abroad informally for religious training without obtaining advance permission or without informing authorities of the purpose of their travel. 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. Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports of reprisals taken against persons traveling abroad in Savannakhet province.

Until recently government-issued identity cards reported the religious affiliations of all adult citizens. Newly issued cards do not specify religion, but are coming into use only gradually, and most persons still carry the old cards. Designation of religious affiliation has created difficulties for members of religious minorities, especially Christians. In many areas, minority believers are identified incorrectly as "Buddhist" on identity cards in what appears to be routine bureaucracy 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 identity 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, although in smaller numbers than in previous years. Most detentions that occurred during the period covered by this report were of short duration, usually less than 2 months. A number of detainees arrested in 2001 were released in Attapeu, Savannakhet, and Luang Prabang provinces. The greatest number of detainees at one time, including those sentenced and those arrested and detained without sentence, was approximately 40 in mid-2002. At the end of the period covered by this report there were 19 religious prisoners and detainees, all Christians. There were some reports that religious detainees were singled out for mistreatment while in confinement. Conditions in prisons are extremely harsh, and religious detainees have suffered as a result of inadequate food rations, lack of medical care, and cramped quarters.

There were several reports that authorities arrested or detained persons, often without charge, because they either held or attended unauthorized religious services. For example, in February 2002, a pastor was arrested in Vientiane province for conducting a religious service without authorization; the pastor was released after 1 month's detention following LFNC intervention. In January 2002, a senior church member was briefly detained in Vientiane province after speaking with foreign visitors. In March 2002, authorities in Savannakhet arrested and detained two LEC church pastors who were presiding at a funeral. The two were released after several weeks of detention, following the intervention of the LFNC. On June 9, 2002, officials in Somsaad village, Champhone district, detained 20 LEC church Christians who were attending a Sunday morning worship service in Savannakhet province. The detained were accused of holding an unauthorized meeting and taken to the district office; all 20 were released after several weeks' detention. On the same day, three LEC church leaders were arrested in Dongphoum village, Saybouli district, for conducting an unauthorized worship service. The three were being held

in the district jail, reportedly in manacles, at the end of the period covered by this report. In June 2002, four ethnic Yao were arrested in Luang Namtha province for holding an unauthorized prayer service; the four reportedly were manacled in their cells at the end of the period covered by this report. On June 22, 2002, in Kasi district of Vientiane province, two ethnic Khmu church leaders were arrested in the village of Phonsida for conducting an "unauthorized" prayer service at the home of a sick church member; both leaders were in detention at the Kasi district jail at the end of the period covered by this report.

There also were reports that persons were arrested and detained without trial for other religious activities. For example, in April 2002, 11 Christian citizens of the country were arrested in Bokeo province when they reentered the country from Thailand with religious material. All 11 were subsequently released after paying small fines for bringing in "illegal" religious material.

The following persons were arrested for religious activities and remained in detention without charge at the end of the period covered by this report: Phiasong in Phongsali province; Keung, Ae Noi, Sonkan, Khamphone, Khamdaeng, and Khamthong in Savannakhet province; Sia Chay, Lu Oon, Su Chia and Nay Siaw in Luang Namtha, and Khamsay and Avin in Vientiane.

The following persons were tried and convicted, and remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report: Sisamouth Sirisouk, Boonmi Gindavong, and Peto Onchanh in Luang Prabang province; Nyoht and Thongchanh arrested in Oudomxai province.

In Houaphanh province, authorities continued to detain a former military officer (Khamtanh Pousy) who had converted to Christianity before his arrest. Although Khamtanh was charged with "anti-government activities," some persons familiar with his case maintain that his arrest was due in part to his religious belief.

Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that authorities detained or deported foreigners for religious reasons.

Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that provincial authorities instructed their officials to monitor and arrest persons who professed belief in Islam or the Baha'i Faith.

Until late 2001, officials in some areas of Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Savannakhet provinces continued to force LEC church Christians to sign renunciations of their faith under threat of arrest, denial of educational opportunity for their children, and restrictions on access to government services. Church officials reported that some detainees held for their religious beliefs were released only after they agreed to renounce their faith. Some civil servants were threatened with loss of their positions if they did not sign the renunciations. These attempts appear to have ceased by late 2001, and no reports of forced renunciations surfaced after December 2001. However, Hmong Christian communities in Vang Vieng district of Vientiane province did experience "strong pressure" from local authorities to renounce their religious faith. Nevertheless, the forced renunciation campaign of the past several years has led to the decimation of LEC church membership in some areas, and many churches in areas affected by the campaign have lost most of their congregations. Church leaders believe that many, if not most, of those who have renounced their faith did so as an expedient only, and will rejoin their former churches when conditions improve.

The overwhelming preponderance of arrests have been of religious leaders and the most active and visible proselytizers, not of practitioners. Despite the end of the formal renunciation campaign, local officials also continued to threaten with arrest congregations and believers. Although officials generally took no action, such threats have had a chilling effect on religious practice.

In November 2001, an unknown assailant shot and killed prominent LEC church pastor Thongla near his home in Sayaboury province and injured his daughter. In March 2002, authorities in Sayaboury province announced that they had arrested Thongla's uncle as a suspect for the killing; however, the suspect subsequently was released for lack of evidence. By the end of the period covered by this report, the killing remained unsolved. Although police in Sayaboury claimed the killing likely was the result of a family dispute, many members of the religious community doubted this explanation and suspected that the killing was because of the pastor's religious activities.

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.

Forced renunciations of faith continued in a number of provinces during the period covered by the report, although there were no new reports of such renunciations after December 2001. In Vientiane, Savannakhet, and Luang Prabang provinces, local officials instructed Christians, especially those belonging to the Khmu ethnic minority, to renounce their Christian faith. There were no reports during the period covered by this report of forced renunciations involving profane rituals such as drinking of animal blood, as there had been in the previous reporting period.

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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government's record of respect for religious freedom, particularly towards its Christian minorities, improved modestly during the period covered by this report. Incidents of arrests of religious leaders declined, and there were no reports of forced renunciations of faith after December 2001. In addition authorities allowed several churches that had been ordered closed in Vientiane, Savannakhet, and Luang Prabang provinces to reopen.

In general the Government appeared to have taken a more conciliatory approach to its religious minorities, and towards the LEC church in particular, and to adopt a policy of greater tolerance toward Christian groups. The LFNC took the lead in this effort; officials from the LFNC traveled to provinces that had experienced abuse of Christians in order to instruct local officials on the need to tolerate the activities of Christian congregations. The Vice President of the LFNC who oversees the religious issue personally visited several provinces as part of this effort. In addition the President of the LFNC spoke publicly on the need for tolerance toward Christians.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The various religious communities coexist amicably; society places importance on harmonious relations, and the dominant Buddhist faith generally is 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, inter-religious tensions arose on rare occasions within some minority ethnic groups, particularly in response to proselytizing or to disagreements over rights to village resources. Tensions also have arisen over the refusal of some members of minority religious groups to participate in Buddhist or animist religious ceremonies.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The arrival of a new Ambassador in September 2001 allowed the U.S. Embassy to address the issue of religious freedom with government leaders at the most senior levels. The Ambassador spoke directly about the state of religious freedom in the country with the President, Party Secretary, Prime Minister, Vice President, both Deputy Prime Ministers, and the President of the LFNC, as well as with most Ministers. Other Embassy officers raised the issue of religious freedom at the working level with a range of central and provincial officials. The Embassy maintained an ongoing dialog with the Department of Religious Affairs in the LFNC, and as part of this dialog, the Embassy informed the LFNC of specific cases of arrest or harassment, and used this information to intercede with local officials.

Embassy representatives met with all of the major religious leaders in the country during the period covered by this report. Embassy officials actively have encouraged religious freedom despite an environment that is restricted by the government owned and government controlled media.

The Embassy supported and encouraged the January 2002 visit of the President of the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), a U.S.-based NGO devoted to promoting religious freedom, to survey the status of religious freedom. During this visit, the IGE President traveled to the LEC church communities in northern Vientiane province, and the visit resulted in the reopening of several churches in the area that local authorities had closed. Following this visit, at the invitation of the IGE, a delegation from the LFNC traveled to the United States to discuss religious freedom with U.S. government officials, members of Congress, and others interested in the issue.

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 just over 23 million. According to government census figures, in 2000 approximately 60.4 percent of the population were Muslim; 19.2 percent practiced Buddhism; 9.1 percent Christianity; 6.3 percent Hinduism; and 2.6 percent Confucianism, Taoism, and other traditional Chinese religions. The remaining percentages were accounted for by other faiths, including animism, Sikhism and the Baha'i Faith.

Non-Muslims are concentrated in East Malaysia, major urban centers, and other areas.

In April 2002, the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) initiated an interfaith dialog aimed at promoting better understanding and respect among the country's different religious groups. Participants included representatives from the Malaysian Islamic Development Department, the Malaysian Ulama Association, and the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS).

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. In September 2001, the Prime Minister declared that the country was an Islamic state (negara Islam). 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. However, the Government has not prevented Falun Gong members from carrying out their activities in public.

For Muslim children, religious education according to a government-approved curriculum is compulsory in public schools. There are no restrictions on home instruction.

Several religious holidays are recognized as official holidays, including Hari Raya Puasa (Muslim), Hari Raya Qurban (Muslim), the Prophet's birthday (Muslim), Wesak Day (Buddhist), Deepavali (Hindu), Christmas (Christian), and, in Sabah and Sarawak, Good Friday (Christian).

During the 1999 controversy over the proposed new guidelines on non-Muslim places of worship (see Section II), the MCCBCHS and the Federal Territory Counseling and Service Center separately urged the Prime Minister to create a national "inter-religious" council; howver, no such council had been created by the end of the period covered by this report.

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 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 lies solely within 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 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.

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. Throughout 2001 government officials and ruling party politicians claimed that opposition Islamic party members were giving political sermons in mosques around the country.

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.

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 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.

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. Some state governments ban certain Muslim clergymen from delivering sermons.

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 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 no longer would 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.

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.

In February 2002, the pro-opposition Council of Ulamas submitted a memorandum to the Conference of Rulers urging action against six academics who it alleged had belittled the Prophet and humiliated Islam in their writings. The Council of Rulers referred the memorandum to the National Council on Islamic Religious Affairs. No action had been taken at the end of the period covered by this report.

State governments in Kelantan and Terrengganu, which are controlled by the Islamic opposition party, made efforts to restrict Muslim women's dress in 2000. In Kelantan, a total of 120 Muslim women were fined between January and May 2002 for not adhering to the dress code. The Terrengganu state government introduced a dress code in 2000 for government employees and workers on business premises. Terrengganu's executive counselor in charge of women's and non-Muslim's affairs claimed that the dress code was designed to protect the image of Muslim women and to promote Islam as a way of life. One Muslim women's NGO criticized the new requirement, stating that forced compliance with a state mandated dress code is not consistent with the values of the Koran, although the law is not known to have been enforced. According to an unconfirmed report, Muslim women previously had been fired in Kelantan for not wearing a head covering.

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 (ISA) 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.

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 country's various religious believers generally live amicably.

The Government has a comprehensive system of preferences in the administration of housing, education, business, and other areas for Bumiputras (the country's indigenous people), 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 rep-

resentatives met and maintained an active dialog with leaders and representatives of various religious groups.

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 area is approximately 67 square miles, and the estimated population in 2002 was 56,630. Major religious groups 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 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 or religious groups not named in the 1999 census, but which local religious leaders believe to consist of Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Salvation Army.

There are foreign missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Roman Catholic Church, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Baptist Church, and other groups. Only Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses proselytize through door-to-door home visits. Religious schools are operated by the Catholic Church, the United Church of Christ, the Assembly of God, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and the Baptist 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. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, 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 free 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 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.

Under President Amata Kabua during the early 1990's, the Government mandated the establishment of a national council of churches, which representatives of all faiths were invited to join. This group still exists in name, but largely has been inactive.

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.

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 its population is approximately 107,000. 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 (Mormons), 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 country, including Seventh-Day Adventists and Mormons.

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 strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. 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 free 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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relations 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. Representa-

tives of the Embassy regularly meet with the leaders of religious communities in the country.

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 seek to register face 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 2.4 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 (books containing religious teachings) should be in the Mongolian language and that all members of the 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-Olgiy. Kazakhs operate Islamic schools for their children. They sometimes receive financial assistance from religious organizations in Kazakhstan and Turkey. The Kazahks' status as the majority ethnic group in Bayan-Olgiy was established in the former Socialist period and continues in much the same circumstances.

There is a small number of Christians in the country, including Roman Catholics, Russian Orthodox, and members of some Protestant denominations. There are no nationwide statistics on the number of Christians in the country. The number of citizens who practice Christianity in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, is approximately 24,000, or 0.3 percent of the registered population of the city.

Some citizens practice shamanism, but there are no reliable statistics on their numbers.

Foreign missionary groups include Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, various evangelical Protestant groups, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), 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 seek to register face 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 that 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 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 payments 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 mid-level 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 approximately 260 temples and churches founded since 1990, approximately 150 are registered, including 90 Buddhist, 40 Christian, and 4 Baha'i. There also is one Muslim mosque. Two new Christian churches were registered in Ulaanbaatar in 2002. Contacts with coreligionists outside the country are allowed.

Religious instruction is not permitted in public schools. There is a school to train Buddhist lamas in Ulaanbaatar.

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 and some citizens. 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. Churches that violate the law may not receive an extension of their registration. If individuals violate the law, the Government may ask their employers to terminate their employment.

Some missionary groups were still in the process of registering with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs during the period covered by this report. 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 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 in the past, humanitarian assistance was accompanied by proselytizing activity. Some conservatives have criticized foreign influences on youth and children, including foreign religions 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. Government 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 mid-level 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, as well as with leaders and clergy of Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, and Mormon religious groups. In addition the Embassy has 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 U.N. 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; however, the Government restricts this right in some circumstances.

Respect for religious freedom deteriorated somewhat during the period covered by this report. In May 2002, an immigration official confiscated the passports of visiting officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and told the officials that they would have to speak to the police about their activities in the country. Intervention of a senior immigration official was required in both this and a similar incident in 2001 before the passports were returned and the officials were allowed to leave the country. The Government also placed some restrictions on the practice of religion by Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses, most of whom are foreign workers employed by the government-owned Nauru Phosphate Corporation (NPC).

There were no indications of general societal discrimination against particular religious denominations; however, economic problems resulting from declining income in the country's important phosphate mining industry have led to some social strains, and there has been resistance by some elements of the Nauru Protestant Church (the country's dominant religion) to religions perceived as foreign, in particular to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues, including restrictions on 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 10 square miles, and its population is approximately 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 19th and early 20th centuries. There are a few active Christian missionary organizations, including representatives of the Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic faiths.

Many foreign workers in the country's phosphate industry practice faiths different from those of native-born citizens. Both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses have won converts among such workers, some of whom hold religious services in their Nauru Phosphate Corporation (NPC) owned housing. Practitioners of "foreign" religions thus are concentrated in the area used by the NPC for workers' housing, known as Location.

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. Under the Constitution, the rights to freedom of conscience, expression, assembly and association may be contravened by any law that "makes provision which is reasonably required . . . in the interests of defense, public safety, public order, public morality or public health." The Government has cited this provision as a basis for preventing foreign churches from proselytizing native-born citizens.

There is no state religion; however, Nauru Protestant Church officials and congregants hold influential positions in both the Government and the Nauru Phosphate Corporation.

Officials of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have been informed that, under the provisions of the Birth, Death and Marriage Ordinance, their churches must register with the Government in order to operate in an official capacity (i.e., to build churches, hold church services in the multinational facility owned by the NPC, and otherwise practice freely their religion). The legal counsel for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has asserted that, while the ordinance in question permits the Government to recognize a religious denomination, it only requires such recognition if a denomination's ministers wish to solemnize marriages. The Church reported that it submitted a registration request in 1999; however, the Government did not respond either to the original request or to follow-up inquiries. As of June 30, 2002, officials of Jehovah's Witnesses had not submitted a request for such registration.

Christmas and Easter are official holidays.

The Government has not taken specific actions to improve inter-religious relations.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government has prevented officials of both Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from visiting the country in their official capacity and on occasion has prevented them from visiting the country at all. While in the country, these officials have been prevented from practicing openly their religion, and have been discouraged from making contacts with native-born citizens. The Government has cited, as a justification for such restrictions, concern that outside churches might break up families through their proselytizing activity.

On two occasions, the Government detained visiting Mormon officials and confiscated their passports and airline tickets. On the first occasion, in January 2001, an immigration officer informed the church officials as they were attempting to leave the country that they were in violation of the requirement that a citizen sponsor their visit, and that their passports were being taken for photocopying. However, on the second occasion, in May 2002, no such explanation was given; in that instance, church officials had obtained the required sponsorship and visas. Intervention of a senior immigration official was required in both instances before the passports were returned and the officials were allowed to leave the country.

There is a multi-denominational religious facility for foreign phosphate workers in the area known as Location; however, Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses are not permitted to use this facility for religious services or meetings. Members of both of these religious groups, who are drawn largely from the Filipino, Tuvalan, and I-Kiribati communities, also have been threatened with revocation of their work visas if they hold religious services in their NPC-owned living quarters.

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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

No evidence exists of general societal discrimination against specific religious denominations; however, economic problems resulting from sharply declining income from the country's phosphate mining industry have led to some social strains, and there has been resistance by some elements of the Nauru Protestant Church to religions perceived as foreign, in particular to the Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Although the U.S. Government does not maintain a resident embassy in the country, the U.S. Ambassador to Fiji also is accredited to the Government of Nauru. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji have discussed religious freedom issues, including restrictions on religious freedom, with representatives of the Government of Nauru in Suva.

The 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 its population is approximately 3.8 million. The religious composition of the country is predominantly Christian but continues to become more diverse. Ac-

cording to the 2001 census, approximately 55 percent of citizens identified themselves as Christian or as affiliated members of individual Christian denominations. Three major Christian denominations—the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches—continued to experience a decline in membership between 1996 and 2001, while the Roman Catholic Church showed a slight increase. Anglicans remain the largest Christian denomination, with 15 percent of the population in 2001. The Maori Christian churches, including Ratana and Ringatu, experienced significant growth rates; Ratana grew by 34 percent and Ringatu grew by 84 percent between 1996 and 2001. After experiencing growth of 55 percent between 1991 and 1996, the number of Pentecostals declined by approximately 19 percent between 1996 and 2001, to less than 1 percent of the population. During the same period, non-Christian religions continued to show strong growth rates, driven primarily by immigration. From a low base, the number of Sikhs increased by 538 percent, and the Rastafarians increased by 122 percent. Other non-Christian groups increased as well: Taoists by 97 percent, Muslims by 73 percent, Hindus by 53 percent, and Buddhists by 47 percent. Hindus and Buddhists each now each account for approximately 1 percent of the population; other non-Christian religions each account for less than 1 percent. More than 38 percent of the population either claimed no religious affiliation (26.76 percent), objected to answering questions about religious affiliation (6.23 percent), or declined to state a religious affiliation (5.51 percent).

According to 2001 census data, the following were the numbers and percentages of the population's religious affiliation: No religion—1,028,052 (26.76 percent); Anglican—584,793 (15.22 percent); Roman Catholic—486,015 (12.65 percent); Presbyterian—417,453 (10.87 percent); objected to answering the question—239,241 (6.23 percent); did not state affiliation—211,638 (5.51 percent); Christian (no more specific identification)—192,165 (5 percent); Methodist—117,415 (3.06 percent); Baptist—50,598 (1.32 percent); Ratana (a Maori/Christian group with services in the Maori language)48,975 (1.27 percent); Buddhist—41,535 (1.08 percent); Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)39,915 (1.04 percent); and Hindu—38,769 (1.01 percent). In addition there were more than 90 religious groups represented that each constituted less than 1 percent of the population. The indigenous Maori (approximately 15 percent of the population) tend to be followers of Presbyterianism, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), or Maori Christian faiths such as Ratana and Ringatu. Maori Christian faiths integrate Christian tenets with precolonial Maori beliefs.

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 strives to protect 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; however, 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 experienced 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 non preference students (students who do not fit within the "unique character" of the school; for example, non-Catholic stu-

dents who attend a Catholic school). 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. Students cannot be required to attend an integrated school; admission to integrated schools is based on the student's request.

Christmas Day, Good Friday and Easter are official holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion; however, some businesses are fined if they attempt to operate on the official holidays of Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. The small but growing non-Christian communities have 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 businesses 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.

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

The U.S. Mission regularly includes representatives from a wide range of religious faiths at its sponsored events. In October 2001, the Embassy sponsored a video conference on "Islam: An American Perspective," in which an expert on the Middle East exchanged views with religious leaders and with representatives of Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the New Zealand Defense Force, the media, local universities, and the New Zealand Institute of International Relations. In late September 2001, the U.S. Consulate in Auckland invited leaders of various faiths to participate in an event honoring the victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

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 religious 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 (approximately 2,000 members),

the Seventh-Day Adventists (approximately 1,000 members), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) (approximately 300 members), and Jehovah's Witnesses (approximately 70 members). Modekngei, 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 3,700 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 19th 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, including 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 SeventhDay 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 strives to protect 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 registration to any group 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; representatives of any religion may request financial support from the Government to establish a school. The Government also provides small scale financial assistance to cultural organizations.

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

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. However, 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 in 1998 the Ministry decided to deny work permits to Bangladeshi workers in the future. In July 2001, the Ministry extended this policy to Indians and Sri Lankans. The ban on issuance of new work permits extends to all citizens of the three countries concerned, regardless of religion. Workers from these countries present in the country at the time of the decision were not expelled, and there are no impediments on their 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 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. Government 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 contacts with the various religious communities in the country.

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 with a total area of 280,773 square miles, and its population is approximately 5.1 million. According to the 2000 census, the churches with the largest number of members are the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. At that time, 96 percent of citizens identified themselves as members of a Christian church. Minority religions include the Baha'i Faith and Islam; there reportedly are approximately 15,000 Baha'is and 1,000 to 2,000 Muslims in the country. 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 19th century. Colonial governments initially assigned different missions to different geographic areas. Since territory in the country is aligned strongly 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.

Non mainstream 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 found converts within 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.

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 strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

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 as 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." During the period

covered by this report, government officials, including the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, attended rallies held by visiting Christian evangelists.

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 personnel with which to take over these institutions and agreed to subsidize their operations on a per pupil or 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 missionary 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 that is 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 free 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 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. During the fall of 2001, the public debate on Islam reopened; however, following public statements of support from the Catholic Church and other religious authorities emphasizing tolerance, the issue again was resolved in favor of continuing to allow Muslims to practice their religion freely.

The 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 15 parareligious organizations, including the Young Women's Christian Association, participate in its activities; however, the self-financing Council only has Christian affiliates. The ecumenical work of the Council of Churches is confined primarily to cooperation among churches on social welfare projects.

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 continued discussions with the Council of Churches and individual church leaders throughout the period covered by this report. The Ambassador and the Em-

bassy's consular officer meet 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.

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. In August 2001, the Government reached agreement with this group to implement a cease-fire. In May 2002, the Government and this group signed an agreement outlining the implementing guidelines on the humanitarian, rehabilitation, and development aspects of the peace process. 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 country has a total 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 available official census data on religious preference (1990). The results of the data on religious preference from the 2000 census were not yet available at the end of the period covered by this report. Other Christian denominations together comprise approximately 8.7 percent of the population. Muslims totaled 4.6 percent of the population 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 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 charismatic lay 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 very 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 community are concentrated in five provinces of western Mindanao, the only provinces in which they represent the majority: Maguindanao; Lanao del Sur; Basilan; Sulu; and Tawi-Tawi. There also are significant Muslim communities in nearby Mindanao provinces, including Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, (this is a new province, added in 2001, which is located in the middle portion of what was formerly all 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, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mor-

mons), and Philippine (Southern) Baptist denominations. In addition, there are three churches established by Filipino religious leaders, the Independent Church of the Philippines or Aglipayan, the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ), and the Ang Dating Daan (an offshoot of Iglesia ni Cristo). 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 throughout the country, including 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, and under the Constitution church and state are separate. 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 non stock, 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 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 and that have contributed to Mindanao's economic development and to the peace process with insurgent groups.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established in 1990 to respond to Muslim demands for local autonomy in areas where they represent a majority or a substantial minority. In 1996 the Government signed a peace agreement with the Islamic Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), concluding an often violent struggle that lasted more than 20 years. Following the 1996 peace agreement, a largely free, fair, and peaceful plebiscite for an expanded ARMM was held in August 2001 with one additional province, Basilan, and one additional city, Marawi, voting to join the ARMM regional government (which previously had been comprised of Sulu, Tawi Tawi, Lanao del Sur, and Maguindanao).

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. The integration of ex-MNLF fighters into the armed forces and police has been somewhat effective in easing suspicion between Christians and Muslims.

Peace negotiations between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the chief remaining armed Muslim separatist group, continued during the period covered by this report. In June 2001, the Government and the MILF agreed to implement a ceasefire; however, intermittent clashes continued. In May 2002, the Government and the MILF signed an agreement outlining guidelines on the humanitarian, rehabilitation, and development aspects of the 2001 peace agreement. Negotiations that could lead to a more formal peace arrangement continue.

In July 2001, President Macapagal-Arroyo issued strict instructions to the military that mosques were not to become targets and no mosques were to be entered in pursuit of suspects.

The teaching of religious classes in public schools is permitted with the written consent of parents, provided that there is no cost to the Government. 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 addition, in February 2002, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) issued an order directing public schools to allow interested groups to distribute the Bible for free in their schools. In many parts of Mindanao, Muslim students routinely attend Catholic schools from elementary to university level. These students are not required to receive Catholic religious instruction. In November

2001, DECS directed that schools ensure that the religious rights of students are protected, and specifically that Muslim students are allowed to wear their head coverings (hijab), and that Muslim girls not be required to wear shorts during physical education classes. In October 2001, the Philippine Military Academy announced plans to erect a mosque on campus to allow Muslim cadets (10 out of a total student body of 700) a place to worship and to enhance cultural awareness of Islam for all cadets.

There are 1,569 existing Islamic schools (madaris) across the country. Of these, 832 madaris are located in the ARMM, while 737 are located outside the ARMM. Only 35 of the madaris are registered with DECS. This is due in large part to the inability to meet the DECS' accreditation standards for curricula and adequate facilities. President Macapagal-Arroyo has called for the integration of the madrassah schools into the country's national education system. A new program, Education for Peace and Progress in Mindanao, was announced in May 2002, and is to be implemented in the 2002-2003 school year. The program's goal is to integrate madaris into the country's national education system and "to foster religious understanding between the country's Muslim minority and the Christian majority." The five-point program agenda includes information and communications technology, madrassah education, peace education, and Mindanao culture and history. It also includes teacher training. The program is to be used in madaris in the ARMM initially, and eventually in all of the provinces of Mindanao. Some critics have stated that the program violates the prohibition against state-funded promotion of religion.

The Government has declared the Catholic holidays of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, All Saints' Day, and Christmas official holidays. In 2001 President Macapagal-Arroyo also declared the last day of Ramadan, or Eid al-Fitr, to be an official holiday. This declaration prompted a very positive reaction from the Muslim community. In May 2002, a Senate bill was introduced which would permanently create two Muslim national holidays, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al Adha (celebrating the annual pilgrimage to Mecca). The bill had not been passed by the end of the period covered by this report.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Muslims, who are concentrated in many of the most impoverished provinces in the country, complained that the Government has not made sufficient efforts 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. In the last half of 2001, the Government increased its efforts to stimulate economic development in the south. The Government solicited foreign aid specifically targeted at the ARMM and other areas of Muslim concentration, in part as a means of addressing the terrorist threat. 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 there were no Muslim senators or Supreme Court justices. There were 9 Muslims in the 214-member House of Representatives.

The Code of Muslim Personal Laws recognizes the Shari'a civil law system as part of national law; however, it does not apply in criminal matters, and it applies only to Muslims. Some Muslim religious leaders (ulamas) argue that the Government should allow Islamic courts to extend their jurisdiction to criminal law cases. There currently are 14 Shari'a Circuit Court judges and one Shari'a District Court judge. As in other parts of the judicial system, the Shari'a courts suffer from a large percentage of unfilled positions. Some of the ulama also support the MILF's goal of forming an autonomous region governed in accordance with Islamic law.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Prior to the November 2001 elections for ARMM officials, more than 80 persons were killed and many more wounded when MNLF members loyal to outgoing ARMM Governor Nur Misuari attacked an Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) outpost in Sulu. Misuari fled to Malaysia in late November 2001, where he was detained for entering Malaysia illegally; and he was deported to the Philippines in

January 2002. From January 2002 to the end of the period covered by this report, Misuari was detained in the Philippines on charges of sedition and rebellion.

Doubts have been raised about the loyalty of some of former MNLF rebels who were integrated ("integrees") into the armed forces and the national police in 2000, as outlined in the 1996 peace agreement between the MNLF and the Government. In the wake of the uprising by Nur Misuari loyalists in November 2001, the Government conducted a loyalty check of integrees. Although no integrees were reported to have been expelled at that time, suspicions lingered. In January 2002, a firefight took place in Jolo, Sulu Island, between police integrees and Armed Forces of the Philippines marines in which 21 persons were killed. Civilians hacked to death three government soldiers the day after the clash. Fifty Muslim integrees were moved from Sulu Island to their headquarters in Maguindanao in an effort to ease tensions. A television reporter, held hostage under suspicious circumstances, claimed upon her release that her kidnapers had been MNLF integrees. Many observers question the veracity of her report.

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. In late May 2001, the ASG kidnaped 20 hostages, including several foreign nationals. More hostages were taken in June 2001, and several were beheaded by their captors. Most of the hostages were released, amidst allegations that ransom was paid. The U.S. Embassy in Manila stated that on June 7, 2002, two of the three remaining hostages were killed during a rescue attempt; and the third hostage was injured but was recovered by AFP troops and survived. Philippine military officials announced on June 21, 2002, that a high-ranking Abu Sayyaf leader and designated spokesman, Abu Sabaya, had been killed in a firefight with Filipino troops. As of the end of the period covered by this report, Abu Sabaya's body had not been recovered. Both Philippine and U.S. officials believe Abu Sabaya to be dead based on eyewitness reports that he was shot multiple times and fell into shark-infested waters too deep to be searched thoroughly for remains. Captured Abu Sayyaf guerillas testified that prior to the June 7, 2002 firefight Abu Sabaya had ordered the killing of the three remaining hostages. 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 criticized strongly the actions of the ASG and its renegade offshoots as "un-Islamic."

The Government placed responsibility on the MILF for mass killings on July 16, 2000, in Bumbaran, Lanao del Sur Province; however 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.

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 perpetrators have not been found and there were no new steps taken in the case.

President Macapagal-Arroyo briefly declared a "state of lawlessness" in Basilan in July 2001, and gave the military the power to detain suspected Abu Sayyaf members and supporters for 36 hours without an arrest warrant. The military detained 73 Muslim individuals under this authority. Some with names similar to those of Abu Sayyaf members remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report. Several human rights groups maintain that the detainees are innocent civilians who were targeted because they are Muslim.

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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious affiliation customarily is 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 of their religion. Christian missionaries work in most parts of western Mindanao, often within Muslim communities.

Although Christian-Muslim relations remained strained, they improved during the period covered by this report, mainly due to such Government actions as the renewed efforts to negotiate with the separatist MILF, the appointment of a Muslim cabinet secretary, the declaration of Eid al-Fitr as a national holiday, and increased assistance to Muslims making the Hajj. However, the Government's crackdown on the terrorist ASG beginning in July 2001 led to accusations by many human rights NGO's of police and military abuses.

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 lower educational levels. Muslims report that they have difficulty renting rooms in boarding houses or being hired for retail work if they use their real name or wear distinctive Muslim dress. Some Muslims therefore use a Christian pseudonym and do not wear distinctive dress when applying for housing or jobs. 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 NGO, 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-Ulamas Conference, which meets monthly to deepen mutual doctrinal understanding between Roman Catholic and Muslim leaders in Mindanao, helps further the Mindanao peace process. The convenors of the conference are the Archbishop of Davao, Ferdinand Capalla, the President of the Ulama Association, Majid Mutilan, and Bishop Hilario Gomez. 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. Other active groups include the Mindanao State University Peace Institute, the Ranao-Muslim Christian Movement for Dialogue, the Peace Advocates of Zamboanga, the Ateneo Peace Institute, and the Peace Education Center of the Notre Dame University.In October 2001, 85 Christians and 23 Muslims participated in a Youth Peace Camp. The camp was organized by school teachers in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte. At the conclusion of the camp, participants stated that they felt that the conflict in Mindanao is not religious, but rather economic in nature, and that it could only be resolved by respect, justice, and trust.

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.

The International Association for Religious Freedom has a regional office in Manila, and the International Religious Liberty Association held its World Congress on Religious Freedom in June 2002.

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 (USAID) budgeted $40.6 million for grant assistance to Mindanao in 2002. Much of this is targeted towards the poorest regions of Muslim Mindanao. USAID operates the Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) program, which supports conflict resolution mechanisms and seeks to improve governance and education in the ARMM. The Livelihood Enhancement and Peace Program (LEAP) assists in the reintegration of 25,000 former Muslim combatants and provides development assistance to hundreds of communities in MNLF areas.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy sent both Muslim and Catholic leaders to International Visitor Programs in the United States. Participants in one three-week program examined the U.S.'s commitment to religious freedom, and explored ways in which religious diversity enhances public policy debate and contributes to the development of stable communities in the U.S. Other religious leaders from Mindanao participated in a 4-week International Visitor Program on "Conflict Resolution and Development." The Philippine International Visitor Alumni Association established its own working group focusing on peace and Muslim-Christian relations.

The Embassy also brought several prominent U.S. citizens to the country to give talks and to participate in discussions on religious freedom. In October 2001, a professor from one U.S. university spoke to numerous audiences on the topic of conflict resolution and cross-cultural understanding for 1 week.

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

The country comprises two major islands that have a total area of approximately 1,000 square miles, and the population is approximately 210,000. 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 (Mormons), 10 percent; and Seventh-Day Adventist, 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.

Foreign nationals and immigrants practice the same religions as native-born (Western) Samoans. There are no sizable foreign national or immigrant groups, with the exception of U.S. citizens, most of whom are American Samoans.

The major denominations (for example, Congregational, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) that are present in the country all have missionaries, as does the Bah'ai Faith.

There is little or no correlation between religious differences and ethnic or political differences. Religious groups include citizens of various social and economic strata.

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 strives to protect 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 the Government observes and enforces these provisions. The Constitution and law also provide for the protection of the right of religious freedom and effective remedies for violation of that right. Legal protections cover discrimination or persecution by private as well as government actors, and laws are applied and enforced in a nondiscriminatory manner. 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, although Christianity is favored constitutionally, there is no official or state denomination.

There are no requirements for the recognition of a religious group or for licenses or registration. Missionaries operate freely, either as part of one of the established churches, or by conducting independent revival meetings.

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 following school hours.

Aside from Christmas, there are no religious holidays that are considered national holidays.

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 free 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 could not be used to infringe upon villagers' freedom of religion, speech, assembly, or association. During the period covered by this report, there were no reports that persons were banished by villages due to their practicing religion differently from that practiced by the village majority.

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 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. 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 also maintains contacts with representatives of the country's various religious communities.

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 adversely racial or religious harmony.

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 254 square miles, and its total population is approximately 4 million, of whom 3.3 million are citizens or permanent residents. According to an official survey in November 2000 by the Census of Population Office of the Department of Statistics, 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 population. Approximately 15 percent of the population are Muslim, approximately 15 percent are Christian, and approximately 4 percent are Hindu. The remainder are adherents of other religions, agnostics, or atheists. Among Christians, the majority of whom are ethnic 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 ethnic Chinese, approximately 14 percent are ethnic Malay, and approximately 8 percent are ethnic Indian. Virtually all ethnic Malays are Muslim and most ethnic Indians are Hindu. The ethnic Chinese population is divided among Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity, or is 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 ensure 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 housing 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, has some regulatory functions over Muslim religious matters, and oversees a Mosque Building Fund financed by voluntary payroll deductions.

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 do not disadvantage a particular group. It also reports to the Government on matters affecting any racial or religious community and investigates complaints.

The Government does not permit religious instruction in public schools.

There is one official holiday for each of the major religions in the country: Hari Raya Haji for Muslims, Christmas for Christians, Deepavali for Hindus, and Vesak Day for Buddhists.

The Government does not promote interfaith understanding directly; however, it sponsors activities to promote inter-ethnic harmony, and, because the primary ethnic minorities each are predominantly of one faith, 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 members of Jehovah's Witnesses to profess, practice, and propagate their religious belief, and the Government does not arrest members merely for being believers, 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, although the Bible itself has not been outlawed. A person in possession of banned literature can be fined up to $2,200 (SD 4,000).

As of June 30, 2002, there were 30 Jehovah's Witnesses incarcerated in the Armed Forces Detention Barracks because of their refusal to carry out the legal obligation for all male citizens to serve in the Armed Forces. (There were no known conscientious objectors other than members of Jehovah's Witnesses during the period covered by this report.) The initial sentence for failure to comply with the military service requirement is 15 months' imprisonment, to which 24 months are added upon a second refusal. Subsequent failures to perform required annual military reserve duty result in 40-day sentences; a 12-month sentence is usual after four such refusals.

Since the beginning of 2000, public secondary schools have suspended indefinitely at least 15 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 lawsuit 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. From January 2001 through June 2002, at least three more secondary school students were suspended indefinitely for not singing the national anthem. Some parents wrote letters to individual school principals and the Minister of Education requesting reconsideration, which was denied.

The 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," allows the Government 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 among various religious groups or to restrain them from mixing religion with politics. The orders place indi-

viduals on notice that they should not repeat such acts, and advise them that failure to comply would result in prosecution in a court of law.

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 content of the play. The Government rejected the application on the grounds that the play might inflame religious and ethnic passions.

Missionaries, with the exception of members 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 inter-communal relations.

On December 31, 2000, police arrested and later charged 15 Falun Gong adherents for conducting a 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 the People's Republic of China (PRC). The group had not sought a permit, asserting that police had not responded to their previous efforts to obtain permits; the authorities stated that these assertions were untrue. In March 2001, seven members of the group were sentenced to 4 weeks in jail for refusing to hand over placards to the police. The other eight, who were charged with assembling without a permit, were fined $540 (SD1000) each. Of the six PRC citizens who were imprisoned, the authorities later canceled the immigration status of five, including one permanent resident, and required them to leave the country; the remaining PRC citizen already had departed the country.

In October 1999, the Government proposed compulsory education for all children, which prompted concern from the Malay/Muslim community regarding the fate of madrassahs (Islamic religious schools). In response the Government exempted madrassah students from compulsory attendance in national schools when the legislation was enacted in October 2000. However, madrassahs 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. Compulsory education is scheduled to be implemented beginning with the new school term that starts on January 1, 2003.

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. Requests to take additional wives may be refused by the Registry of Muslim Marriages, which solicits the views of existing wives and reviews financial capability. Of the approximately 4,000 Muslim marriages registered in 2001, only 20 were polygynous.

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 is an ongoing debate over the "tudung" (woman's headscarf); the debate is reported widely in the local press. In early 2002, three female Muslim secondary school students were suspended from public schools for continuing to wear the tudung in violation of school uniform requirements. A fourth girl's parents withdrew her from school over the same issue. The girls' parents objected to the suspensions; the matter remained pending in preliminary court proceedings at the end of the period covered by this report. In February 2002, an opposition leader criticized the Government's ban on the wearing of tudungs in public schools during a speech at "Speakers' Corner," which occupies a portion of a public park. He continued despite a police warning that the speech violated the venue's restrictions against discussing sensitive ethnic or religious issue in public. He later was convicted of violating the Public Entertainment and Meetings Act, and was fined $1700 (SD3000); fines over $1130 (SD2000) automatically bar a person from seeking public office for 5 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 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 regarding the Malay community and by Malays regarding the non-Malay community are based on both ethnicity and religion, which are virtually impossible to separate.

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 the various religious communities in the country.

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 approximately 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 of the population. Other groups, such as the Baha'i Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), 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 to hold public religious ceremonies. According to the most recent census figures, there are only 12 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 Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

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 free expression; and, on the other hand, maintenance of public order. All religious institutions are required to register with the Government; however, there were no reports 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 the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Melanesia, the United Church (Methodist), the South Seas Evangelical Church, and the SeventhDay Adventist Church. 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: The Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the South Seas Evangelical Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 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 approximately 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 Adventist Church, the United Church (Methodist), the South Seas 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 free 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 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. 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 officially limits the number of foreign missionaries that may work in the country, although these quotas are not strictly enforced.

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 2000 survey, over 99 percent of the population professed some religious belief or faith. According to the Government's National Statistics Office, approximately 94 percent of the population are Buddhist, and 5 percent are Muslim; however, recent estimates by other government agencies, academics, and religious groups state that approximately 85 to 90 percent of the population are Therevada Buddhist, and up to 10 percent of the population are Muslim. Estimates also indicate that Christians constitute approximately 1 to 2 percent

of the population. There are small animist, Hindu, Sikh, Taoist, Jewish, and Confucian 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 Therevada 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 between 6 and 10 percent of the population. There are approximately 3,320 mosques in 59 provinces, with the largest number 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 (RAD) to be from 1 to 2 percent of the total, are associated with the Shi'a branch of Islam.

According to government statistics, Christians constitute approximately 0.7 percent (438,600) of the population. Almost half of the Christian population lives in Chiang Mai province. The remainder live in the Bangkok area and in the northeastern provinces. Approximately 25 percent of the Christian population is Roman Catholic. There also are 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 approximately 23,000 persons. Both are associated with small immigrant groups that arrived from South Asia during the 20th 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 May 2002, there were approximately 2,900 Dhammaduta working in the country. In addition the Government sponsored the international travel of another 881 Buddhist monks sent by their temples to disseminate religious information abroad. Christian and Muslim organizations also reported having small numbers of citizens working as missionaries in the country 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 in effect is Therevada 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 Therevada Buddhism named the official religion on the grounds that such an actionwould 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 pat-

tern 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, which is located in the Ministry of Education, registers religious organizations. 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. In addition, 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. However, since 1984 the Government has maintained a policy of not recognizing any new religious faiths. In practice unregistered religious organizations operate freely, and the Government's policy of not recognizing any new religious faiths has not restricted the activities of unregistered religious groups.

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 $52 million (2.184 billion baht) 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 also are tax deductible for private donors.

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 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 2001 meeting in Bangkok drew 500 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 jointly organized 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

A January 2002 immigration "blacklist" included the names of at least ten Falun Gong practitioners. The Government gave no reason for its decision to place these names on the list, and has refused to release information about the individuals placed on the list. All apparently are overseas residents who have been arrested in other countries for Falun Gong-related activities.

In February 2001, Thai Falun Gong members voluntarily decided not to proceed with plans to 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. For example, the Government has not recognized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). However, unregistered religious organizations operate freely.

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 quota system permits 400 Roman Catholic, 623 Protestant Christian, and 10 Islamic missionaries per year to work legally in the country. In addition to these formal quotas, many more missionaries, while not registered formally as missionaries, are able to live and work in the country without government interference. This informal group includes 150 missionaries from the Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

While official registration conferred some benefits, such as longer terms for visa stays, being unregistered 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.

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 orders 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 May 2002, no arrest had been made in the case. The book in question remains banned.

National Identity Cards produced by the Ministry of Interior since April 12, 1999 include an optional designation of the religious affiliation of the holder. 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. However, in practice, most female civil servants are permitted by their superiors to wear headscarves if they wish to do so, particularly in the country's southernmost provinces. Muslim female civil servants not required to wear uniforms are allowed to wear headscrarves.

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 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.

None of the religious communities led "ecumenical" movements.

Religious groups closely associated with ethnic minorities, such as Muslims, experience some societal economic discrimination; however, such discrimination appears to be linked more to ethnicity than to religion.

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 Mormons 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 dutyfree 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 Mormons 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 enforced strictly for all businesses, regardless of the business owners' religion.

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'u'llah, by name. Similarly, the TBC does not allow Mormons to discuss their 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 about 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 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 the country; the U.S. Ambassador in Suva, Fiji is 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 area of approximately 10 square miles, and an estimated population of 10,300. The Church of Tuvalu, which has historic ties to the Congregational Church and other churches in Samoa, has the largest number of followers. There are no official figures on religious membership; however, government officials estimate membership is as follows: Church of Tuvalu, 91 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists, 3 percent; Baha'i, 3 percent; Jehovah's Witnesses, 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 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, with the exception of 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, often include Christian prayers, clergy, or perspectives.

Missionaries practice without specific restrictions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

In 2001 the country's sole radio station was sold to a private owner who charges all churches for radio broadcasting time except for daily morning devotions. 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 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 the country, given that they comprise over 90 percent of the population.

There are no ecumenical movements.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Although the U.S. Government does not maintain a resident embassy in the country, the U.S. Ambassador to Fiji also is accredited to the Government. 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 at times 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 belongs to Christian churches, although many combine their Christian faith with some pre-Christian cultural practices. Church membership primarily is 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 Adventist Church. The John Frum Movement, a political party that also is an indigenous religious movement, is centered on the island of Tanna and includes less than 5 percent of the population. Muslims, members of 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 19th and early 20th centuries. Some foreign missionaries continue this work; however, the clergy of the established churches now primarily are indige-

nous. Missionaries represent the Church of Christ, Presbyterians, Seventh-Day Adventists, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics. 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. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

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, which requires religious organizations to register with the Government. A few churches have registered voluntarily under the act. Some churches were concerned that the legislation would have a chilling effect on missionary activity. However, although Parliament has made no effort to repeal the act, it remains dormant; two of the new missionary groups most likely to be affected reported that the legislation did not inhibit their religious practices during the period covered by this report.

The Government interacts with churches through the Ministry of Home 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 Vanuatu Christian Council members, provides grants to church operated schools, and pays teachers' salaries at church operated schools that have been in existence since the country's independence in 1980. 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 Ministry of Home 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.

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 free 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 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.

In rural areas, traditional Melanesian communal decisionmaking predominates. If a member of the community proposes to introduce a significant change within the community, such as the establishment of a new church, the chief and the rest of the community must agree. If a new church is established without community approval, the community views the action as a gesture of defiance by those who join the new church and as a threat to community solidarity. However, subsequent friction generally has been resolved through appeals from traditional leaders to uphold individual rights.

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.

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 significantly those publicly organized activities of religious groups that were not recognized by the Government or that it declared to be at variance with state laws and policies. The Government generally allowed persons to practice individual worship in the religion of their choice, and participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly. However, restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of religious groups remained in place, and the Government maintained supervisory control of the recognized religions, in part because the Communist Party (CPV) fears that not only organized religion but any organized group outside its control or supervision may weaken its authority and influence by serving as political, social, and spiritual alternatives to the authority of the central Government.

Religious groups faced difficulties in training and ordaining clergy, and conducting educational and humanitarian activities. Religious figures encountered the greatest restrictions on their activities when they engaged in activities that the CPV perceived as political activism and a challenge to its rule. There were credible reports that in 1999, 2000, and 2001 Hmong Protestant Christians in several northwestern villages were forced to recant their faith. Montagnards also were forced to recant their faith during the period covered by this report. The penal code, as amended in 1997, established penalties for offenses that are defined only vaguely, including "attempting to undermine national unity" by promoting "division between religious believers and nonbelievers." In some cases, particularly involving Hmong Montagnard Protestants and Hoa Hao followers, when authorities charged persons with practicing religion illegally, they used provisions of the penal code that allowed for jail terms of up to 3 years for "abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion." There were reports that officials fabricated evidence, and that some of the provisions of the law used to convict religious prisoners contradicted international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to credible reports, the police arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practice, particularly in the mountainous ethnic minority areas. However, police abuses of unrecognized Protestants in the Central Highlands in part were related to the independence movement actively espoused by some Protestant groups.

The Government controlled the administrative process leading to the creation of official organizations for the major sanctioned religions, including the naming of their officers. In some cases, (most notably with the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Buddhist religions), some former leaders of the nonofficial pre-1975 organizations, as well as many believers, rejected the official organizations.

Overall, there were some improvements in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Official government recognition is required for all religious groups (as well as for social organizations) to operate legally; those without official status, especially certain sects and denominations of Buddhists, Protestants, Hoa Hao, and others, operated illegally and at their own risk. Oversight of recognized religions and harassment of non recognized religious followers varied from locality to locality, apparently not entirely as a matter of national policy. These restrictions were particularly harsh in some border provinces during the reporting period, although religious practice and observance became easier for worshipers in other parts of the country. During the period covered by this report, members of unrecognized religious groups were beaten, arrested, and detained by the authorities. In April 2001, the Government officially recognized the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam (SECV). However, following ethnic unrest in February 2001 in the Central Highlands provinces of Gia Lai and Dak Lak, the Government took action against Protestant ethnic minorities whom it suspected of participating in unauthorized political activities. Many of these Protestant ethnic minorities, however, did not belong to recognized denominations, and were not protesting for religious reasons, but rather were protesting against the loss of tradi-

tional 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. Some ethnic minority Protestants reportedly were forced or pressured to recant their faith, especially those suspected of belonging to a Protestant group that advocated political autonomy for the region. Foreign diplomats visited the Central Highlands several times during the period covered by this report, although the provinces continued to provide "escorts" and plainclothes "security." The Government continued to permit increased, but supervised access to these provinces by diplomats, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other foreigners, making it somewhat difficult to verify conditions in those areas. Police routinely questioned persons who advocated non-mainstream religious views and arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practices. Groups of Protestant Christians, who were worshipping in house churches in ethnic minority areas, arbitrarily were subjected to detention and harassment by local officials who occasionally 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." The estimated number of religious prisoners and detainees exceeds 40 persons.

The relationship among religions in society generally is amicable. In various parts of the country, there were modest levels of cooperation and dialog between Catholics and Protestants, and also between Buddhists and Cao Dai. Religious figures from most major recognized religions participated in official bodies such as the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the National Assembly.

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) 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, provincial officials, and others. Intervention by the U.S. Government may have prompted the Government to recognize additional Protestant denominations, and to moderate treatment of ethnic minority Protestants in the Central Highlands, and to promote some liberalization of Government treatment of other religions.

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 one Buddhist organization (Buddhists make up approximately 50 percent of the population), one Roman Catholic organization (Catholics make up approximately 8 percent of the population), several Cao Dai organizations (Cao Dai followers make up 1.5 percent of the population), one Hoa Hao organization (Hoa Hao followers make up 1.5 percent of the population), two Protestant organizations (Protestants make up 1.2 percent of the population), and one Muslim organization (Muslims make up 0.1 percent of the population). 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 the country's "triple religion." Some estimates suggest that more than half of the population is at least nominally Buddhist. Buddhists typically visit pagodas on festival days, and have a world view that is shaped in part by Buddhism, but in reality these beliefs often rely on a very expansive definition of the faith. Many individuals, especially among the ethnic majority Kinh, who may not consider themselves Buddhist, nonetheless follow traditional Confucian and Taoist practices and often visit Buddhist temples. One prominent Buddhist official has estimated that only about 30 percent of Buddhists are devout and practice their faith regularly. The 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 historically have engaged on occasion in political and social issues, most notably during the 1960s, when some monks campaigned for peace and against perceived injustices in the former Republic of Vietnam. 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 to 7 million Roman Catholics in the country (approximately 8 to 9 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 defeated in 1954. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics from the northern part of the country fled to HCMC (then called Saigon) and to the 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 HCMC 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 reinstituted religious services.

Recently several bishoprics that had been vacant for a number of years were filled by the Vatican, in coordination with the Government. 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 HCMC; and a coadjutor bishop for Phan Thiet. There are reports of some narrowing of differences between the church and the Government over three remaining vacancies—a bishop of Hung Hoa Diocese, a coadjutor bishop of Hanoi, and a bishop of Haiphong Diocese. Provincial authorities have explicit veto power over the transfer of priests and the assignment of newly ordained priests, and exercised that power on at least three occasions during the period covered by this report. Government officials nonetheless have stated that they "view the Catholic Church as a positive force."

There are at least 1,000,000 Protestants in the country (over 1.2 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. Protestantism, particularly the house church movement in ethnic minority areas, is the fastest growing religion in the country. Perhaps as many as 175,000 or more of the followers of house churches are Pentecostals, who celebrate "gifts of the spirit" through charismatic forms 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 continued to grow 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, Tai, and other ethnic minorities (an estimated 200,000 followers) in the northwest provinces and some 350,000 members of ethnic minority groups of the Central Highlands (Ede, Jarai, Bahnar, and Koho, among others). The house church movement in the northwest was sparked in part by Hmong language radio broadcasts from the Philippines beginning in the late 1980's. In more recent years, missionaries, mostly ethnic Hmong, have increased evangelism in the area.

The Cao Dai religion was founded in 1926 in the southern part of the country. The Office of Religious Affairs estimates that 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 HCMC and the Mekong Delta. There are 13 separate groups within the Cao Dai religion; the largest is the Tay Ninh sect which is comprised of more than half of all Cao Dai believers. The Cao Dai religion 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. A small Cao Dai sect, the Thien Tien sect, was recognized in 1995. The Tay Ninh Cao Dai sect was granted legal recognition in 1997.

The 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, emphasizing private acts of worship and devotion, 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; affiliated expatriate groups estimate that there may be up 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 to surrender to Communist forces in the Mekong Delta in the summer of 1975.

Mosques serving the country's small Muslim population, estimated at 65,000 persons, operate in western An Giang province, HCMC, Hanoi, and provinces in the southern coastal part of the country. The Muslim community mainly is composed of ethnic Cham, although in HCMC and An Giang province it includes some ethnic Vietnamese and migrants originally from Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. About half of the Muslims in the country practice Sunni Islam. Sunni Muslims are concentrated in five locations around the country. Approximately 15,000 live in Tan Chau district of western An Giang province which borders Cambodia. Nearly 3,000 live in western Tay Ninh province, which also borders Cambodia. More than 5,000 Muslims reside in HCMC, with 2,000 residing in neighboring Dong Nai province. Another 5,000 live in the south central coastal provinces of Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan. Approximately 50 percent of Muslims practice Bani Islam, a type of Islam unique to the ethnic Cham who live on the central coast of the country. Bani clerics fast during Ramadan; ordinary Bani followers do not. The Bani Koran is an abridged version of only about 20 pages, written in the Cham language. The Bani also continue to participate in certain traditional Cham festivals, which include prayers to Hindu gods and to traditional Cham "mother goddesses." Both groups of Muslims appear to be on cordial terms with the Government and are able to practice their faith freely. They have limited contact with foreign Muslim countries.

There are a variety of smaller religious communities not recognized by the Government, the largest of which is the Hindu community. Approximately 50,000 ethnic Cham in the south-central coastal area practice a devotional form of Hinduism. Another 4,000 Hindus live in HCMC; some are ethnic Cham, but most are Indian or of mixed Indian-Vietnamese descent.

There are estimated to be from several hundred to 2,000 members of the Baha'i Faith, largely concentrated in the south; a number of whom are foreign-born. 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 HCMC and Hanoi.

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. No statistics are available on the level of participation in formal religious services, but it generally is acknowledged that this number has continued to increase from a relatively low base in the early 1990s.

Ethnic minorities constitute approximately 14% of the overall population. The minorities historically have practiced sets of traditional beliefs different from those of the ethnic majority Kinh. Except for the Khmer, most minorities are less likely to be Buddhist and are more likely to be Protestant than the majority Kinh.

Several dozen foreign missionary groups throughout the country are engaged in developmental, humanitarian, educational, and relief efforts. These organizations legally are registered as NGOs providing humanitarian assistance. Foreign missionaries legally are not permitted to proselytize or to carry out religious activities. In order to work in the country, they must be registered with the Government as an international NGO.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of belief and worship as well as of non-belief; 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 and to participate in public worship under the leadership of any of the major recognized religions—the Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Muslim religions. Participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly. However, the Government used regulations to control closely religious hierarchies and organized religious activities. While the Office on Religious Affairs oversees recognized religious bodies and is tasked with protecting their rights, in practice there are few effective legal remedies for violations of religious freedom committed by government officials. The constitutional right of freedom of belief and religion is interpreted and enforced unevenly. In some areas, such as parts of HCMC, local officials allow relatively wide

latitude to believers; in other provinces in the north, the Central Highlands, and the central coast, religious believers are subject to significant harassment because of the lack of effective legal enforcement and are subject to the whims of local officials in their respective jurisdictions. For example, some religious groups that lacked registration were subjected to local government harassment. This particularly was true for Protestant and United Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) supporters. There are no known cases in recent years in which the courts acted to interpret laws so as to protect a person's right to religious freedom.

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 and other groups to register and uses this process to control and monitor religious organizations, as it does with all social organizations. The Government officially recognizes Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai and Muslim religious organizations. However, some leaders of Buddhist, Protestant, and Hoa Hao organizations and many believers of these religions do not recognize or participate in the government-approved associations. Some leaders of the pre-1975 Buddhist and Hoa Hao religious bodies unsuccessfully have requested official recognition of their organizations. Their activities, and those of the unregistered Protestant "house churches" are considered illegal by the authorities, and they sometimes experience harassment as a result. 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, its structure, and the overall scope of its activities. Recognized religious groups in principle are allowed to open, operate, and refurbish places of worship, to train religious leaders, and to obtain permission for the publication of materials.

Officially recognized religious organizations are able to operate openly in most parts of the country, and followers of these religions are able to worship without government harassment. 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 must approve investitures of religious titles. The Government's influence varies by level of the title, religion, and local authority. For example the power to approve a religious office holder below the provincial level lies with the provincial government. Higher level officials receive much closer scrutiny. Decree 26/1999 explicitly gives the Government the power to approve all holders of religious offices, and the Government effectively, but not explicitly, has veto power. In general, religious bodies are confined to dealing specifically with spiritual and organizational matters. Over the past several years, the Government has accorded much greater latitude to followers of recognized religious organizations, and the majority of the country's religious followers have continued to benefit from this development. The Government has held conferences to discuss and publicize its religious decrees. The Religious Affairs Committee has met with house church leaders from HCMC and the Central Highlands.

Religious organizations must register their regular activities with the authorities annually. 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 to 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 varies widely. In April 2001 the Government recognized the SECV. The SECV was able to elect its own officers, apparently free of government control. The newly recognized church is represented in all of the southern provinces of the country. The SECV is descended from churches associated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA). Some additional "underground" congregations that were once affiliated with the CMA reportedly joined the SECV. However, it appeared that the Government was allowing few former CMA churches in the Central Highlands to join the SECV during the period covered by this report. The northern branch of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN), which also is a derivative of the CMA, has been recognized since 1963 and officially has 15 approved churches in the northern part of the country. A number of other Protestant groups were engaged in discussions with the Government on registration during the period covered by this report.

The Government turned down an attempt by the Baha'i Faith to register during the period covered by this report because the Baha'i had not yet met the administra-

tive criteria for registration. It is unknown which specific criteria the Baha'is were unable to satisfy; however, it is believed that this was not a permanent refusal.

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 engaged in humanitarian activities in many parts of the country. Foreign missionaries and religious organizations are not allowed to operate as such in the country, but many are registered as NGOs with the Government to carry out humanitarian assistance. They may not engage in overt proselytization.

Most Catholic churches 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. There are no meaningful punishments for government officials who do not follow laws protecting religious practice in particular. 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 recent cases in which the courts acted to interpret laws so as to protect a person's right to religious freedom.

There are no specific religious national holidays.

The Office of Religious Affairs occasionally hosts meetings for leaders of diverse religious traditions to address religious matters.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government continued to maintain broad legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom, although in many areas, Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Hoa Hao, and Cao Dai reported an increase in religious activity and observance. 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, although these types of restrictions appeared to be easing.

The Government continued to ban and actively discourage participation in what it regards as illegal religious groups, including the UBCV and Protestant house churches, as well as 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 of 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 any semblance of government control.

The Government requires all Buddhist monks to work under the officially recognized Buddhist organization, the Central Buddhist Church of Vietnam (CBS). The Government influenced the selection of the leadership of the CBS, excluding leaders and supporters of the pre-1975 Buddhist organization. The Government also restricted the number of Buddhist monks that may be trained. Khmer Theravada Buddhists are allowed a somewhat separate identity with the CBS. The Government continued to oppose efforts by the unrecognized 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 UBCV monks in Hue also continued to complain that petitions to local authorities for permission to repair or renovate pagodas go unanswered. The UBCV monks in Hue complain that the CBS has "donated" Buddhist properties for Government use. Buddhist believers in Ha Nam province complained that CBS pagoda grounds have been seized in recent years and that their complaints go unanswered. Monks at the One Pillar Pagoda (CBS) in Hanoi have resisted local government efforts to replace them with monks favored by the local government. The Roman Catholic Church continued to face many restrictions on the training and ordination of priests, nuns, and bishops. 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. The Prime Minister received the Episcopal Council (the grouping of Bishops nationwide) for the first time in December 2001. During the period covered by this report, the Catholic Church hierarchy remained frustrated by government restrictions; but it has learned to accommodate itself to them. 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 HCMC that offer English-language masses for expatriates. The Church was able to engage in religious education, including the education of children, and to perform charitable activities in some geographic areas. Six Roman Catholic seminaries throughout the country had over 800 students enrolled; new seminarians are recruited every 2 years. A seventh seminary has been approved by the Government. 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.

Until 2001 approximately 15 ECVN churches in the northern provinces were the only officially recognized Protestant churches. The ECVN has not held an annual meeting or elected new leadership since 1988, reportedly because the Government and the ECVN have been unable to reach consensus on new ECVN leadership. The ECVN operated seminary closed in 1993, although informal training of religious and lay leaders continues. The Government reportedly has rebuffed attempts by largely Hmong house churches to affiliate with the ECVN over the last several years. On April 17, 2001, the former ECVN church building in Vinh, Nghe An province was torn down. The Government had expropriated the building in the 1960's and the congregation since has been meeting in members' homes.

In April 2001, the Government conferred legal recognition on the SECV. This body represents several hundred Protestant churches primarily in the southern part of the country, with representatives from every southern province, including the Central Highlands, where many "house churches" operate. Some SECV churches exist in other large cities such as Da Nang. Officials in the SECV's main HCMC office have stated that gradual progress in improving their church's situation was determined to be preferable to outright confrontation with the Government. Many pastors of Protestant denominations such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Mennonites, Baptists, and the Assemblies of God (AOG) still do not wish to join the SECV because of doctrinal differences. The Government still represses the AOG by causing members to lose their jobs, forbidding their children from attending school, or confiscating their property, but it no longer imprisons AOG believers or pastors. It still is unclear to what extent provincial officials will allow the house churches, particularly those whose members are ethnic minorities, 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 SECV and reportedly do not plan to seek affiliation with it. There are over 400 Protestant congregations in Dak Lak province and a similar number in Gia Lai province in the Central Highlands. So far, however, only 2 congregations in Dak Lak and only 3 in Gia Lai have become legally affiliated with the SECV. It is not known whether the SECV is to be allowed, or would like, to have formal ties to the legally recognized ECVN, based in Hanoi.

The provincial governments restrict Protestant practice in the Central Highlands, particularly among the region's ethnic minorities, such as the Mnong, Ede, Jarai and Bahnar. The provincial governments also restrict Protestant congregations from cooperating on joint religious observances or other activities, although in some localities they were free to do so. Protestant Christmas celebrations in the Central Highlands were allowed in some localities, but prohibited in others. There is substantial networking among Protestant denominations in HCMC, but less networking in the rest of the country. "Underground" churches from pre-1975 denominations generally were reported to have fewer restrictions than those that were established more recently. Provincial officials in Lai Chau, Ha Giang, and other provinces in the north and northwest sometimes attempted to pressure Hmong and other ethnic minority Christians to recant their faith. Some provincial officials reportedly have encouraged Hmong clan elders to convince members of their clans to renounce their faith. Efforts to force Protestants to deny their faith appear to be connected to the CPV's Program 184, designed to reverse the spread of Protestantism in areas where it has been advancing rapidly. 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 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 Hoa Hao faith were closed. Believers continued to practice their religion at home but the lack of access to public gathering places contributed to the Hoa Hao community's isolation and fragmentation. A new official Hoa Hao body, the Hoa Hao Central Buddhist Church (HHCBC), was formed

in 1999. Several leaders of the Hoa Hao community, including several pre-1975 leaders, openly criticized the HHCBC, claiming that it was subservient to the Government, and demanded official recognition of their own Hoa Hao body instead. In February 2000 a group of Hoa Hao believers tried to establish an association independent of the government sanctioned HHCBC. They petitioned the Government for official recognition without success. Some of these persons then protested and were arrested and imprisoned. The group's highest officers continued to be incarcerated in prison or under house arrest at the end of the period covered by this report. However, in June 2001 an estimated 300,000 Hoa Hao believers gathered for a religious festival in An Giang province. The Government restricts the number of clergy that the Hoa Hao can train.

The Government never dissolved the Cao Dai church but placed it under the control of the Vietnam 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 1995 the Government recognized the Thien Tien sect of Cao Dai. In 1997 the Cao Dai under government oversight reorganized the religion and set up a new "Management Council" of cooperative Cao Dai priests who drew up a new constitution. When the council rewrote the Cao Dai constitution, 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 Council reached agreement with Cao Dai clergy that the Cao Dai church 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 for the first time since 1975. The Cao Dai Management Council has the power to control all of the affairs of the Cao Dai faith, and thereby manages the church's operations, its hierarchy, and its clergy within the

untry. Independent Cao Dai officials oppose the edicts of this council as unfaithful to Cao Dai principles and traditions. It is unknown if any Cao Dai seminary exists, if the Cao Dai want to open one, or if the Government prevented the Cao Dai from opening one.

The Muslim Association of Vietnam was banned in 1975 but reauthorized in 1992. It is the only registered Muslim organization in the country. Association leaders state that they are able to practice their faith, including saying daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making the Hajj to Mecca. At least 55 Muslims journeyed to Mecca for the Hajj in 2001; Saudi Arabia and Dubai paid their travel expenses. In 2002 no Muslims made the Hajj. Muslim sources in the country stated this was because the traditional financial sponsors had curtailed their foreign sponsorships in late 2001, not because of any restriction on travel for the Hajj on the part of the Government.

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 the 2002 Easter sunrise service, which was witnessed by foreign dignitaries in Kon Tum, and which was attended by over 10,000 Protestant worshippers. Attendance at Buddhist festivals and pilgrimage sites has 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, however, before 1975 they were not permitted to hold any large public gatherings. There were no reports that the Government refused permission for festivals it previously permitted. On the anniversary of the death of the Hoa Hao founder, large gatherings were discouraged. In 2001 and 2002, Hoa Hao leaders did not attempt to organize a large independent commemoration; however, several Hoa Hao followers were allowed to travel individually and in small groups to the traditional pilgrimage site to commemorate the anniversary peacefully.

In April 1999, the Government issued a decree on religion that prescribed the rights and responsibilities of religious believers. The religious decree states that persons formerly detained or imprisoned must obtain special permission from the authorities before they may resume religious activities. Religious activities reportedly are not allowed in prisons, nor are visits by religious workers. Some persons previously detained were released and were active in their religious communities during the period covered by this report, including at least two from HCMC.

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. Other individuals apparently suspected of proselytizing have been unable to renew their visas. Proselytizing by citizens is restricted to regularly scheduled religious services in recognized places of worship. Non-citizens must comply with the law when practicing their religions. In both Hanoi and HCMC, there were Sunday morning Catholic masses conducted in English by local Vietnamese priests for the convenience of foreigners. In both cities, there also were well-publicized Christian worship services for foreigners conducted by foreigners, some of whom were affiliated with religious NGOs, although the legal status of these services is unclear. Muslim services attended by citizens and foreigners took place in both cities.

The Government restricts persons who belong to unofficial religious groups from speaking publicly about their beliefs. It officially requires all religious publishing to be done by the Religious Publishing House, which is a part of the Office of Religious Affairs, or by other government approved publishing houses once the Government approves the proposed items. 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, specifically the poetry of the Founder. However, the official Hoa Hao Representative Committee cited a lack of funds, not government restrictions, as the reason why the Hoa Hao scriptures had not yet been published in full. The Muslim Association reportedly was able to print enough copies of the Koran in 2000 to distribute one to each Muslim believer in the country.

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, religious believers who do not belong to officially recognized religions sometimes 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. However, some ministers of "underground" Protestant churches have been able to travel overseas since early 2001. Like other citizens, religious persons who travel abroad sometimes are questioned about their activities upon their return. Upon return from international travel, citizens, including clergy, citizens and clergy sometimes are required to surrender their passports. The Government allowed many Catholic bishops and priests to travel freely within their dioceses and allowed greater, but still restricted, freedom for travel outside of these areas, particularly in many ethnic areas. Local officials reportedly discourage priests from entering Son La and Lai Chau provinces.

Religious affiliation is indicated on citizens' national identification cards and on "family books," which are household identification documents. In practice, many citizens who consider themselves religious do not indicate this on their identification card, and government statistics list them as nonreligious. The Government does not designate persons' religions on passports. The Government allows, and in some cases encourages, links by officially recognized religious bodies 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. Contacts between Vatican authorities and the domestic Catholic Church occur routinely, 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. However, contacts between some illegal Protestant organizations such as the house churches and their foreign supporters are discouraged. Efforts to block contact between illegal Protestant organizations and overseas contacts are not as vigorous or universal as efforts to block contact between the UBCV and its overseas supporters appeared to be.

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. Attainment of senior military rank is not a prerequisite for senior government or private sector employment. The military does not have a chaplaincy. Avowed religious practice has been a bar to membership in the Communist Party, although Party sources indicated that thousands of the 2.4 million Communist Party members are religious believers. Party and government officials routinely visited pagodas and temples and sometimes even attended Christian church services.

The religious decree of April 1999 stated 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 HCMC 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 stated that approximately 30 percent of Buddhist properties confiscated in HCMC 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. The former Protestant seminary in Nha Trang is used for secular purposes, as is a former Protestant seminary in Hanoi. Most Cao Dai and Hoa Hao properties also have not been returned, according to church leaders. The official Representative Committee for the Hoa Hao stated that the Government returned 12 previously confiscated Hoa Hao pagodas in Dong Thap province during the period covered by this report.

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 HCMC universities. They are not allowed to wear religious dress when they teach or to identify themselves as clergy. Catholic religious education, on weekends or evenings, is permitted in most areas and has increased in recent years, most notably in HCMC. Khmer Theravada Buddhists and Cham Muslims regularly hold religious and language classes outside of normal classroom hours in their respective pagodas and mosques.

In March 2001, teachers at a public primary school in Ban Don 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. Local sources alleged that authorities in many localities in Dak Lak prohibited Protestant children from attending school past the third grade. By the end of the period covered by this report, it was unknown whether or not the students returned. Discrimination of this sort has been denied by local authorities, but such reports still persist.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

A significant number of religious believers experience harassment because they operate without legal sanction. Local officials have repressed unregistered Protestant believers in the northwest provinces, the Central Highlands, and other areas, through the demolition of churches and through pressure to renounce their religious beliefs. Some UBCV leaders continued to be harassed and had their rights severely restricted by the Government. Officials also have detained or otherwise harassed some persons, primarily Buddhists and ethnic majority Kinh, who have used purported spiritual activities or powers to cheat and deceive believers. Police authorities routinely question persons who hold dissident religious or political views. Credible reports suggest that police arbitrarily detained, beat, and harassed an unknown number of persons based on their religious beliefs and practice, particularly in mountainous ethnic minority areas.

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 have used 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 have been ongoing 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 probation 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 probation, some local authorities held persons under conditions resembling house arrest. The authorities use administrative probation as a means of controlling persons whom they believe hold dissident opinions. Some local authorities cite "abuse of religious freedom" as a reason to impose administrative probation.

The authorities in the northwest provinces reportedly restricted 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 underground nature of the house churches, notably among ethnic minorities, has contrib-

uted to greater repression of these groups. There are unconfirmed reports that house churches are tolerated or ignored in some places, but the extent and provincial locations in which this occurs are unknown. Provincial officials in certain northwest provinces reportedly do not allow churches or pagodas to operate. Reports of arrest and imprisonment for nonviolent religious practice continue to persist, especially in large groups in contravention of local government edicts, because national security and national solidarity provisions in the Constitution override guarantees of religious freedom.

On numerous occasions throughout the country, small groups of Protestants belonging to house churches were subjected to arbitrary detention after local officials broke up unsanctioned religious meetings. There were many reported instances, particularly in remote provinces, 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 goods, livestock, and money from Protestant believers. There were reports from the northwest and the Central Highlands of local officials driving ethnic minority persons out of their home villages for refusing to renounce their Protestant faith. The extent to which religious affiliation or other factors such as ethnicity or political activism caused these reported abuses cannot be determined.

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 imprisoned 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 a group, the "Dega Protestants," that advocates a separate state for the indigenous persons who live in the area, particularly in southern Gia Lai and northwestern Dak Lak provinces. The Dega Protestants have links to a group residing in the U.S. that has proclaimed itself a Dega "government-in-exile." The Dega Protestants' relationship with the more apolitical Protestant believers in the area has deteriorated. The Dega Protestants reportedly have made threats against certain mainstream Protestant pastors. Local authorities use this split to try to isolate the Dega Protestants 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 February and March 2001, ethnic minority groups apparently encouraged or organized by the Dega Protestants 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—who mostly were ethnic Vietnamese—and to protest abusive police treatment in the provinces. On March 10, 2001, at a Protestant church in Plei Lau village in Gia Lai province, hundreds of soldiers and police clashed with hundreds of ethnic minority Protestants. Two or three soldiers reportedly shot and killed a civilian who had threatened another soldier with a spear. According to unconfirmed reports, in the immediate aftermath of the February/March 2001 demonstrations, between 1 and 5 persons were killed as a result of police actions, and allegedly hundreds were injured in beatings by authorities. Hundreds of persons in Dak Lak and Gia Lai provinces, including Ama Ger and Ama Bion, two local leaders in Dak Lak, were detained in February and March 2001 and released days, weeks, or even months later. Local police reportedly beat many of the detainees severely while they were in custody. Local reports stated that approximately 100 persons continue to be held without trial and about 40 persons have "disappeared." Many persons reportedly went into hiding, and over 1000 fled to Cambodia. At least 26 persons were tried and sentenced to up to 12 years imprisonment by provincial courts. Although their adherence to Dega Protestantism complicates the issue, these persons were charged with "inciting social unrest" or other charges not related to any religious activities. Although the Government eventually allowed foreign observers into the area several times, each visit was monitored closely by government officials, police, or plainclothes security agents posing as "local newspaper reporters," making an independent assessment of the situation in the area impossible.

Protestants also reported that during the period covered by this report, authorities in the Central Highlands and in mountainous areas of neighboring coastal provinces detained, beat, and harassed numerous Protestant believers. In April 2002 officials reportedly cut off electricity to the homes of ethnic Ede villagers in Ea Trol village in coastal Phu Yen province after they refused to give up Christianity.

There also are a number of unconfirmed reports of groups of inebriated youths beating religious believers at the instigation of authorities. There were credible but unconfirmed reports from multiple sources that local police tortured Protestant detainees in some instances. In December 2001, police in Buon Cuor Knia village in Dak Lak province reportedly beat and shocked with electric wires 12 Christians who had attempted to flee across the border to Cambodia.

During the period covered by this report, the government's response to the 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 retaliated against Protestants in their areas. There were reports that from February 2001 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 allegedly have prevented all assembly for worship since that time. More recent reports claimed that police intermittently broke up all Protestant gatherings, including weddings and funerals, in Krong Pak district, Dak Lak province.

The Government continued to isolate certain religious figures, in particular leaders of the UBCV, by restricting their movements and by pressuring the supporters and family members of other leaders. 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 has 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, several of whom attempt to visit each week. Other visitors who met with him occasionally were questioned by the police. Despite this, government officials in both Hanoi and HCMC told a visiting delegation from the U.S. that Thich Huyen Quang has been under no restrictions since 1997 and is free to travel to any pagoda affiliated with the CBS that is willing to receive him. Thich Huyen Quang has called for the Government to recognize and sanction the operations of the UBCV. In May 2002, he wrote an open letter to Buddhists encouraging them to prevent the suppression of independent Buddhism and to engage in a nonviolent struggle for religious freedom, human rights, and democracy. Government officials reportedly have proposed to move Thich Huyen Quang to Hanoi, or Quy Nhon Town, Binh Dinh province, where medical care for his chronic conditions would be better, but he has refused. Government officials have said that Thich Huyen Quang is free to leave the pagoda, but that he may not return to HCMC.

In February 2001, the UBCV's second-ranking leader, Thich Quang Do, visited Thich Huyen Quang. While he was returning to HCMC, 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 a 1998 5-year administrative surveillance order on Thich Quang Do 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 HCMC. The confinement has been enforced strictly and Thich Quang Do has been unable to meet outsiders during the period covered by this report.

In February 2001, UBCV monks Thich Thai Hoa and Thich Chi Mau organized a "week of prayer" at Tu Hieu Pagoda in Hue City. Between 500 to 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.

In September 2001, UBCV lay follower Ho Tan Anh immolated himself to death in Da Nang. According to a letter left behind by Anh, he took this action to protest CPV policies towards the UBCV, (particularly a campaign directed at UBCV followers in Quang Nam province that began in June 2001).

Hoa Hao believers stated that a number of their leaders remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report. On December 20, 2000, police intervened after 50 to 60 persons attacked a group of 10,000 Hoa Hao followers led by Le Quang Liem, Chairman and founder of the unrecognized Hoa Hao church that

was conducting commemoration ceremonies at the Hoa Hao founder's ancestral home. 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 unofficial Hoa Hao supporters in a park in HCMC. Police detained Liem after he left the group. They released him, but on the following day placed him under administrative probation. Liem claims that he was beaten severely while in police custody. Police detained, then released the other members of the group. Nguyen Van Dien was returned to his home province of Dong Thap and placed under a 2-year administrative probation order. The others who had been detained were released. On March 19, 75-year-old unofficial Hoa Hao member Nguyen Thi Thu immolated 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 HCMC on March 17, 2001.

Two Hoa Hao supporters, Truong Van Thuc and Nguyen Chau Lan, remained incarcerated at Z30A K16 prison at Xuan Loc in Dong Nai province after having been arrested on March 28, 2000, and sentenced to 3 years in prison. They were among 8 persons arrested for planning to organize a commemoration of the death of the Hoa Hao founder; the other 6 since have been released. On June 14, 2000, Vo Van Buu was arrested, along with his wife, Mai Thi Dung, after they met with Nguyen Van Dien. The couple was tried in September 2000 and convicted. Buu received a 30-month prison term; Dung was given an 18-month suspended sentence. There were unconfirmed reports that Buu remained incarcerated at the end of the period covered by this report.

On April 14, 1999, police detained Ha Hai, the third-ranking officer of the HHCBC, in An Giang province and subsequently placed him under house arrest. Hai violated a house arrest order in November 2000 by traveling to HCMC along with other HHCBC officers and supporters to help organize a demonstration planned to coincide with the visit to HCMC of then U.S. President Clinton. Police in HCMC arrested Hai; Hai was tried on January 16, 2001, and sentenced to 5 years in prison for abusing his "democratic rights." On November 28, 2000, 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 remained imprisoned at the end of the period covered by this report.

In May 1999, Hoa Hao follower Bui Van Hue was placed under a 2-year administrative probation order because, according to Hoa Hao sources, he was "very active in his religious activities." In April 2001, with 1 month remaining of the administrative probation order, he crossed the border to Cambodia. In August 2001, he reportedly decided to apply to UNHCR for refugee status, but when he camped out on the sidewalk in front of the UNHCR office in Phnom Penh, Cambodian police reportedly apprehended him and deported him back to Vietnam. In January 2002, a court in An Giang province sentenced him to 3 years imprisonment for violating the administrative probation order and for leaving the country illegally.

On November 1, 2001, police in Cho Moi district of An Giang province ordered Hoa Hao monk Vo Thanh Liem (Nam Liem) to remove the Hoa Hao flag and photograph of the Hoa Hao founder that he had displayed in his pagoda. When he refused, the police entered the pagoda; while the police were inside, Liem locked the door from the outside. After several attempts to break the door down, the police shot at the lock to get out. For the next several days, police remained at the pagoda. On November 6, 2001 Liem climbed up a tree with a knife and a container of gasoline, threatening to kill himself if the police did not go away. After 3 days in the tree and a self-inflicted knife wound to his leg, Liem came down. Despite the incident, Liem was not subjected to arrest or administrative detention.

Priests and lay brothers of the Catholic order 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 re-established its headquarters in Thu Duc District of HCMC 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. Father Tri reportedly is in poor health.

Three Cao Daiists—Ho Vu Khanh, Tran Van Nhi, and Ngo Van Thong—were arrested in 1977 and sentenced to death by a Tay Ninh provincial court. Their sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment. They are believed to be in prison in Hanoi, but apparently because their close relatives have passed away, they have received no visitors for a number of years; it is unknown if they are still alive. 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, were prevented from meeting with U.S. diplomats in 2001, but did receive U.S. diplomats on unscheduled visits in February 2002.

In February 2001 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 inter-religious body independent of government authority. Later in the same month, police surrounded Father Ly's church and placed him under administrative probation. His detention was reported widely in the state-controlled press, which identified him as a "traitor" for submitting written testimony critical of the Government. On May 16, 2001, allegedly as many as 300 police surrounded his church and arrested him. On October 19, 2001, the Thua Thien Hue Provincial People's Court convicted Father Ly and sentenced him to a total of 15 years in prison, 2 years for disobeying the "administrative probation" he received in February, and 13 years for "damaging the Government's unity policy." The court also ordered 5 years of administrative probation, which is to confine him to his place of residence after his release. Father Ly had called not only for religious freedom, but also for an end to one-party rule.

It is impossible 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. Moreover, persons sometimes are detained for questioning and subsequently held under conditions amounting to house arrest using administrative probation regulations without being charged or without their detention being publicized. Among those believed to be detained without having gone to trial are Hmong Protestant Vang Sua Giang in Ha Giang province and Dinh Troi, an ethnic Hre Protestant detained in Quang Ngai in 1999. Unconfirmed reports claim that there are many more Protestants detained in the Central Highlands. 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, were held under conditions that resemble administrative detention. Thich Huyen Quang was 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 had their movements restricted or are watched and followed by police.

There were an estimated 40 religious prisoners and detainees, although the actual number may be higher. This figure is difficult to verify because of the secrecy surrounding the arrest, detention, and release process. Those persons believed to be imprisoned or detained at least in part for the peaceful expression of their religious faith as of June 2002 included: UBCV monk Thich Them Minh ; Catholic priests Pham Minh Tri and Nguyen Van Ly, and Catholic lay person Nguyen Thien Phung; Cao Dai believers Ho Vu Khanh, Tran Van Nhi, and Ngo Van Thong; Hoa Hao lay persons Bui Van Hue, Truong Van Thuc, Nguyen Chau Lan, Vo Van Buu, Ha Hai, Ho Van Trong, and Truong Van Duc. Hoa Hao leaders Le Quang Liem and Nguyen Van Dien remain under formal administrative detention (house arrest). Ethnic minority Tai Protestants Lo Van Hoa, and Lo Van Hen, and ethnic majority Kinh Protestant Nguyen Thi Thanh, were placed under administrative probation.

There were numerous reports during the period covered by this report that groups of vigilantes or "gangs of hoodlums" beat Protestant believers in the Central Highlands. On April 14 2002, a "gang" in Buon Eu Sup village, Dak Lak, reportedly beat

Protestant believer Siu Kret. His father complained to local police about the incident. The police fined the gang members $33 (VND 500,000) and a pig, but the victim's father had to swear to police he was not a Protestant believer in order to collect the compensation. 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.

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. Local authorities reportedly have begun encouraging clan elders to pressure members of their extended families to cease practicing Christianity and to return to traditional practices. Following the ethnic unrest in the Central Highlands in February/March 2001, there also were numerous reports of local authorities forcing ethnic minority Protestants to renounce their faith. In the villages of Druh, B'Le, B'Gha, V'Sek, Koyua, Tung Thang, Tung Kinh, and Dung in Ea H'Leo district of Dak Lak province, ethnic minority commune and district officials, some of whom are ethnic minorities themselves, were assigned to force Protestant followers symbolically to abandon Protestantism by drinking alcohol mixed with animal blood in a ritual called "the ceremony of repentance." In the villages of Buon Sup, Buon Ea Rok, and Buon Koya in Ea Sup district, Dak Lak province, ethnic minority Protestants were forced to undergo the same ritual recantation of faith. There were sporadic unconfirmed reports of this occurring in other instances during the period covered by this report.

In other provinces, authorities have been encouraging "revival of traditional culture," which includes abandoning Christian beliefs. During the last week of May 2001, in Ninh Son district of Ninh Thuan province, officials reportedly gave a picture of Ho Chi Minh to each family in an ethnic Roglai community that had been selected to be upgraded to a "cultural village," with instructions to place the picture on an altar and burn incense in front of it. When four Christian families declined, they were threatened with banishment from the village.

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 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. Some local Protestant churches in some parts of the country have been allowed to affiliate with the SECV. Leaders of non-recognized Protestant churches reported that they were negotiating with the Government for recognition and that police surveillance of their worship activities has declined or ended. Leaders of some Protestant house churches have been allowed to travel overseas. Catholic leaders report that they are able to assign priests more easily than in the past. Attendance at religious services continued to increase during the period covered by this report. The number of Buddhist monks and Catholic priests also continued to increase. Local governments in some parts of the country allowed religious organizations to engage in more charitable and social activities. In addition, there was continued gradual expansion of the parameters for individual believers adhering to one of the officially recognized religious bodies to practice their faiths. The Government reportedly allowed Protestants to begin using a number (possibly as many as several dozen) of long-closed churches in the southern and central parts of the country.

Several hundred to several thousand prisoners benefited from early releases during the period covered by this report, but it is unknown whether any of them were imprisoned for reasons related to expression of their religious faith. Hoa Hao believer Le Minh Triet (Tu Triet), was released in the beginning of May 2002 after serving his 12-year sentence. Some other persons, particularly Hmong Protestants, previously reported detained may have been released.

A leader of a large unrecognized Protestant fellowship has claimed that the Government is developing a new, perhaps more favorable policy on religion and that the Government intends to recognize at least 2 more Protestant bodies by 2004. In addition there has been no known police interference in Protestant worship services in the south since June 2001.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities, and there were no known instances of societal discrimination or violence based on religion during the period covered by this report. In HCMC, there were some informal ecumenical dialogs among leaders of disparate religious communities. Working level cooperation between the Catholic and Protestant churches occurs in many parts of the country. Various elements of the UBCV Buddhists, Catholics, Cao Dai, Protestant, and Hoa Hao communities appeared to network with each other; many of them reportedly formed bonds while serving prison terms at Xuan Loc.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate General in HCMC 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 Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security, and other government offices in Hanoi, HCMC, and the provincial capitals. Embassy and Consulate officials discussed religious freedom with Party officials and with leaders of mass organizations, such as the Women's Union and the Farmer's Union, several times during the period covered by this report. All public organizations fall under the Vietnam Fatherland Front, which is in turn under the control of the Communist Party. Embassy and consulate officials also met with some of the Religious Council officials, which also falls under the Vietnam Fatherland Front, in their capacity as religious leaders as well as with all of the major religious groups, recognized as well as unregistered.

The U.S. Ambassador and the Charge d'Affaires and other embassy officers have 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 Office of Religion, the Vice Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Security, and the chairpersons of Provincial People's Committees around the country, and other senior officials, particularly in the Central Highlands. The Consulate General and other consulate general officials also raised U.S. concerns about religious freedom with senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security, with the Government's Office of Religion, and with the Provincial People's Committee Chairmen, Religious Affairs Committee, and Department of Trade 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 the 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. They also urged greater freedom for recognized religious groups. Embassy and consulate general officials also have focused on specific abuses and restrictions on religious freedom. The April 2001 recognition of the SECV followed direct advocacy by U.S. officials during the annual Human Rights Dialog 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 in HCMC called on the Government to release Thich Quang Do from administrative probation and to allow Thich Huyen Quang to relocate to HCMC on humanitarian grounds. The Consulate General has made several oral and written representations. The Ambassador and other U.S. Mission officials expressed concern for Father Nguyen Van Ly during his detention. After Father Ly's sentencing, the Ambassador and other Embassy officials, noting the harshness of the sentence, called for his early release.

Representatives of the Embassy and the Consulate General met on several occasions with leaders of all the major religious communities, including Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Muslims, Hindus and Baha'is. When traveling in the provinces, embassy and consulate general officers make a point of meeting with local Religious Affairs Committees, village elders, and local clergy and believers. In February 2001 and February 2002, 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 Hoa Hao elder Tran Huu Duyen. Mission officers met Cao Dai Archbishops affiliated with the pre-1975 Cao Dai leadership in February 2002. The Consulate General also maintained regular contact with UBCV monk Thich Quang Do until the re-imposition of his administrative probation order, and with other UBCV Buddhists and officially recog-

nized Buddhists. Embassy and consulate general officers have maintained contact with leaders of the Central Buddhist Sangha. In May 2001, a consulate general officer met with the 95-year-old founder of the Co-Redemprix Order Father Tran Dinh Thu in HCMC. An embassy officer met with Thich Thai Hoa in Hue in September 2000. Embassy and consulate general officers met with the Catholic Archbishops of Hanoi, HCMC and Hue as well as other members of the Episcopal Conference. The Ambassador and other mission officers met with outspoken priest Chan Tin on numerous occasions during the period covered by this report. The Ambassador also met with the Catholic Archbishops of Hanoi and HCMC. The Ambassador and Consul General attended an Easter sunrise service in 2001 in the Central Highlands that was conducted in two ethnic minority languages and presided over by the Bishop of Kon Tum. Embassy and consulate general officers also met repeatedly with leaders of various Protestant house churches and with leaders of the Muslim community.

The U.S. Government commented publicly on the status of religious freedom in the country on several occasions. A delegation led by the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor held a Human Rights Dialog in August 2001 with the Government in which the status of Thich Quang Do, Thich Huyen Quang, the UBCV, Hmong Protestants, Protestants in the Central Highlands, Le Quang Liem, and the Catholic church were discussed.

Some religious sources have cited diplomatic intervention, primarily from the U.S., as a reason why the Government is seeking to legalize more religious groups and is allowing already legalized groups more freedom.